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A Fifth Avenue Parade
and
Other Poems

A Fifth Avenue Parade
and
Other Poems

By

PERCY STICKNEY GRANT



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TO
RITA H. DE ALBA DE ACOSTA
AN AMBITIOUS AND STIMULATING INTELLIGENCE
GIFTED WITH A KNOWLEDGE OF THE BEAUTIFUL
A TANAGRA FIGURE COME TO LIFE
A CAPTIVATING COMPANION

Explanatory Note

THIS volume contains verses published in 1905 in AD MATREM, *now out of print*, and about as many more, which have not before been published.

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A Fifth Avenue Parade

I

WASHINGTON SQUARE

A STRANGER ON THE SIDEWALK TO POLICEMAN AT CURB

“What is this silent, dark crowd
Moving in fours,
Reaching so far up the road?
Poor folk they seem—
Undersized, pale and sad.”

POLICEMAN

“Marching to the graves
Of a bunch of young working girls
Burned near here,
Seven score or more,
A factory fire.”

A WOMAN ON THE SIDEWALK TO THE STRANGER

“My Lizzie works in a loft,
Reached by a wooden stair,
Soaking with oil till it sweats.
Sometime she too will burn,
When comes her fire-trap's turn.
God help us!”

II

Parade, march on!
Beating the death-march
Solemn with foot-falls.
Bands do not play for you.
Dirgeless your woe.
Sorrow propels you.

Flags do not fly, nor banners wave.
Leaders, officials, sashes, batons, placards,
None are here.
Only men and women, in their best clothing,
Mostly black,
Marching.
Some with umbrellas;
Others, women, without hats, in spite of the rain,
Rhythmic tread, the asphalt shining with wet.
Bearded men with haunted faces.
Deep breasted girls with abundant hair.
One a madonna face—remote, hopeless, dazed—
Mary come back to see what her son's death availed.

Saturday afternoon,
Tramping the famous Avenue of fashion,
Reproach stamped in their route—
No, their invasion.
Motoring wealth held up by their ranks,
Cannot escape the sight.
Perplexity leads them;
Disappointment is in their faces.
How can America lure and neglect;
Invite and destroy?
Worse than Nero in Rome!
Christians now burn Christians and Jews.
Rich Jews burn poor Jews and Christians.
Clothing is cheaper so.

Perished, yes, perished is America!
Liberty's torch is a wrecker's decoy.
Pirates' and murderers' prey are we.
Where, O my God, is the hope of the world!

III

Locked was the door, they could not escape.
Against it they flung their bodies;
It did not yield.
Greed, scowling, stood at the door,
Barring the way.
Flame pursued them, wound round their knees;
Burned their hair and embraced them;
Leered as they shuddered and shrieked.
Smoke screened them from one another.
Poured bitter blackness down their throats.
Blinded they fled.
Aflame, yet in darkness, they pushed to the windows,
High above the street.
Clutching each other they leaped out,
Blazing downward like falling stars.

Pressed together, their young breasts,
Furiously beat with consternation.
Death flew laughingly past the windows;
Dove down with them as they fell;
Shrieking a warning lest any stay their fate;
Kept clear the way for their destruction.

In the western sky a young moon swam in gold.
Over the trees in the Square, on a church tower,
Stiffly stood a lighted cross.
Neither God nor man helped the girls.
Out of the heavens came only the wind,
Fanning the flames, blowing the sparks far and wide,
Till in the Square the children clapped their hands,
Danced up and down and shouted for glee.
Terrifying sounds filled the air;
Crackling and snapping of flames;
Crashing glass;
The wails of the crowd as it saw the girls jump;
The clangor of the bells on the fire-trucks;
The hoarse calls of firemen.

Out of the smoke and the flame,
Downward dashed the girls through roofs of glass.
Mangled and dying they set fire to other shops.
Their death but multiplied death.

IV

SUNG UNDER THE WASHINGTON ARCH

In honor of a hero's fame
Who dared a tyrant's armies' face.
You build memorials to his name,
And then usurp the tyrant's place.

The richest man in all the land,
He risked his wealth and risked his head;
But with the people took his stand,
And without pay the people led.

What monuments to rebel deeds—
To generous hearts and acts that match—
Can heal the wounds today that bleed,
Or from our masters power snatch?

Dead as the Sphinx in Egypt's sand,
Dead as the stones in ancient Rome,
Your statues, arches, columns stand.
They cannot build the poor a home.

They cannot give the idle work.
They cannot pay the sick man's rent.
They cannot choke bought justice' smirk,
Nor make vain, insolent wealth relent.

Great names abound, great lives are few.
Great memories but little men.
You laud the old but crush the new.
What mean these helpless carvings then.

V

The end is death whatever the road may be.
But death is not the same that comes to all.
One seeks the goal, disclosing to men great love;
Another flees, reached for by bloody hands.
Slowly, a long way off, one sees the end.
Another drops as in a hidden pit,
Silenced from heaven by an unheard bolt;
Or toiling for a little bread is burned to death.

O faithful feet that follow to the grave!
Bare heads uncovered to the April rain!
You face, each day, as dread a death as these.
Yes, laugh at heaven's belated, hindering rain.
Why splash on these, ye dumb and foolish skies.
You only soak the clothes they have to wear.
They're not afire, the fire is out—
—Yes, yes, the fire is out—
Save in their hearts and that rain cannot quench.

VI

SUNG IN FRONT OF A CHURCH

Where is the God you boast you know?
What is He doing—your God of love?
Scorns He, like you, to glance below?
Spends He the time in sport above?

Home of the fear of sin is this!
Ha, ha, who taught you what sin may be?
Fools! whose idea of heaven is
Sexless to loaf eternally.

Take it from us what a sin is like—
Burning our girls, our slavery's leaven.
Sin is the bargain that you strike,
Who snatch the earth and slip us heaven.

Our bodies are as much to us
As what you call your souls to you.
Share with us labor's overplus.
Do as you would have others do.

Silent, and hard, till harm is done;
Compelled to speak, now shrewdly soft;
Breathing pure air, basking in sun,
You lock us in a death-trap loft.

Hear ye! With God you are at strife.
Soon, soon His foes He will remove.
Sell your churches and give us life;
Kneel in the streets and give us love.

VII

Young Jewesses, dead ere you wed,
I miss you and the new life that you brought
To our new world—
Your foreign looks and ways;
Your centuries-old race,
Bearer in the flesh
Of blows and stripes from every land;
The marks of man's resentment at the spur of mind.

You warmed my heart toward life.
You added meaning to my world.
This new world, old ere its time—
Like a young man dragging his feet.
Your laughing labors;
Your joy in the sun and friendly talk;
Your arms around each other;
Your bodies renunciation of expense;
Your saving for the home or for your blood abroad—
For a brother's ambition or a father's food;
All this I loved.

In the morning from the subway you hurried,
Filling the sidewalk with swift black crowds.
At noon, bare-headed, arm in arm,
You chose your push-cart lunch.
At night you laughed and struggled
To enter a Williamsburg car,
Or looked for your lovers
On the watch in door-ways.
Shyly they greeted you,
And walked by your side.

Why should I mourn your fate?
For those boys there are now other girls.
For you a more thrilling embrace
Than any of maid's or of man's.
What love is as fierce as a flame?
What man is as constant as death?

VIII

VOICES IN THE AIR

O foolish world to burn us!
We could have worked for you longer.
Been your slaves longer.
Our strength, our youth would have fled
Soon enough, too, if you envied that.
Ten years or so,
From fourteen to twenty-four does for us.
We fade. We go to husbands and motherhood,
With the life already bled out of us,
To breed a weakened race.

O mad world,
Why don't you do your work
Mechanically?
Why don't machines decrease evil,
Instead of decreasing jobs,
And intensifying toil?
You make machines of us;
You exalt machines and degrade humans.
Why don't you give human beings,
Born miraculously into the light of day,
More of the joy of their birth?
Joy of the sun, seen in heaven;
Joy of the earth, sweet in odor;
Joy of the terrible waters of lake, river and ocean;
Joy of knowledge;
Joy of strength and mastery;
Joy of laughter and song;
Joy of loving kindness
And of reciprocal affection.

IX

VOICES IN THE PROCESSION

Driven from Zion by foes of Jehovah
We have wandered forty generations
In wildernesses of oppression and poverty.
Without the hatred of war, nations have ridden over us,
Drawn our teeth, bowed our shoulders,
Killed our men,
Raped our women,
Dashed our children against the stones,
Stole our goods.

Now again we mourn.

May their women's jewels burn holes in their flesh,
Eat their fingers, devour their breasts and shoulders,
Scald their scalps!

May their children be deformed in body
As they are deformed in soul!

May they turn upon each other, publicly and without
pity!

May the new weapon of slaves' wrath
Strike them and leave only scattered human scraps!
May the knife, the bullet, the bomb torment their
dreams,

And some day find their flesh and destroy it!

OTHER VOICES IN THE PROCESSION

Remember Jehovah and forgive,
Lest He turn our curses upon our heads,
Delivering over our enemies to greater joys.
Has the Lord's rule come to an end?
His hand is like an earthquake,
His word like thunders.
Lean unto the Lord ye who dishonor His name.
Zion anew will arise,
Under other skies,
Those our fathers knew in the East.
Endure till the days of new worlds!

X

PEOPLE ON THE SIDEWALK SING A HYMN TO JUSTICE

First Voice

Up from the clod
We ascend to God;
From the beast, from the cave,
From the lash, from the slave.

Save, O save
The light that is soul,
The laughter of love.

Show us the whole,
Ye powers above.

Second Voice

Law is now the will of the strong.
Justice, too often, the hate of small hearts.
Power defends the ancient wrong.
Fortune no duty imparts.
Answer our efforts by power to do.
Give us desire for that which is true.
Cease hatreds, injury, treachery's wiles,
Tyrannies, terrors, the lie that beguiles.
All the past riches that man has secured,
All the past sufferings that man has endured,
All endless time for our building has wrought,
Of bone, muscle, brain, of feeling, of thought,
Dome now by brotherhood and justice unbought.

Third Voice

Break justice's sword, there are deaths enough.
Break justice's scales, she's not a grocer.
Let her hands help; not hold such stuff.
Let her eyes see the gold they dose her.

Fourth Voice

Give me justice before I die.
My life is an unheeded cry.
Let me be what I can before I die.
Is power only the right to deny
The aspirations of the weak,
And crush the meek?
Let me sing the song that is in me,
Do the deed, show the love that may win thee.
O justice, O fullness of life divine,
Make Life's unborn power mine.

Fifth Voice

No prophet or saint
Has guessed the gift
The world contains,
Clean of all taint,
Of blemish, of rift,
Without conscious pains,
If men will work with united hands—
One people formed from many lands.

All Voices

Soon, shall we wake from brutish sleep,
From sunken self to joy in life perceived as radiant
strength.

Coming like strong horses on whose heads shines the
sun.

Courageous as little birds who fly far over the waves
of the ocean.

Soon, soon we shall help each other conquer the power
to rule—

Not man—but nature for man's soul-feasting and
social joy.

Soon, soon we shall glory in self-rule and self-help,
Aided by all good companions in ordered armies of
effort,

The joy of larger consciousness in all.

The joy of power heaped high from garnered waste,
From man's drugged dreams and childish sports.

The joy of genius's new birth.

Its creature now not only art but life;

New means of lifting man above the brute;

Machines and armies sensitive as souls.

Welcome Home*

I

Up the vast harbor, goal of millions of dreamers,
—Hail, Liberty, facing the dawn with thy flame!—
Past Ellis Island where workmen await deportation,
Sail the khaki-clad, valiant youths of the nation
—God help below, the basketed, mad, blind, lame!
Speed with hilarious decks the crafty hulls of huge
 steamers;
Freighted with forms of the future they come.
Welcome home! Welcome home! Welcome home!

Sirens' crescendos crack the skies
Our joys to advertise.
Every engineer
Gives a steam-whistle cheer.
The plying ferry-boats
Hoot from happy throats.
The liners in their docks
Join the deafening shocks—
With hollow, vibrant basso drum
“They come! They come! They come!”
What speech, except just noise,
Can welcome back our boys?

*Phi Beta Kappa poem read at Sanders' Theatre, Harvard College,
June 16, 1919.

The mighty city awakes
And laughs, as its pillow it shakes—
“The boys are back, thousands are landing,
Home-folks, crowded on wharves, are standing;
Travel-stained, hungry, humbly demanding,
At most, incredible embraces,
At least, a glimpse of dear faces.”

O, how far it sounds!
Leaping the land like hounds,
Over prairie and mountains it bounds:
Thrilling with tear-swept joys
Mothers unweaned from their boys;
Calling to ranches and farms—
“The child who faced war’s alarms
Now hastens to your arms”;
While echoes up torrent-torn cañons
Gladden home-kept, luckless companions.

It calls in tenement houses,
Until the worker arouses
From dreams that the mill-whistle lashes,
Snaps and snarls, like a whip, till she dashes
Half washed, half fed, with scant clothes
To the brutal machine she loathes.
Ah: this is no whistle, no dream at all.
This is a lover's call—
A husband, brother, sweetheart, son,
Whose distant duty is done.

Out of expected death,
Out of self's free surrender,
Out of war's poisonous breath,
Destruction's last defender,
Return they again to life,
Waked, awed with wonder,
To mother, or maid or wife,
Graver but finer and fonder.

II

Where have I heard before this blend of passionate voices,
This high, monotonous scream,
Like being's eternal stream
Fleeing death
With deep breath
And all song by which triumph rejoices?
When winter's ice and snow
Melt as spring winds blow,

Down hillsides tumble, in brooks overflow,
Resounds the sleepless monotone
Of Freedom, unshackled, come to her own.
In meadows and marshes and ditches,
Where frogs peep in high and low pitches,
Laugh derisive frost's failure to hold them,
Shriek taunts as soft slimes enfold them,
Day and night,
Dark and light,
There have I heard this call,
Victory's mad antiphonal.
Where yellow grasses turn to green
With sweet violets between;
Where the bright swamp marigold
Guardian moats of water hold—
Skunk-cabbage's lush leaves and pungent smell
Protect its seed in a bronze-flecked shell:
Where in drier places
The sun, a new shade traces,
Gaily hangs flame-tipped columbine,
Up which bees clamber
For honied amber,
And white, starred anemones shine,
There I have heard before this symphony
Of life's victory—
The shouts of those who survive,
The laughter of those left alive.

III

Again exulting victory cries
—Not from the battlefields of earth,
Whose voices have extinguished mirth—
But chorals that unlock the skies,
Whither our dead arise,
As heroes, saints, martyrs and beauties come,
All heaven sings: "Welcome home!"

The beautiful, the young, the brave
Disease and war have hurried to the grave.
Innumerable armies of the dead
Bend the heaven beneath their tread.
Never did life so much with death converse,
Or stalwart bodies shudder at a hearse.
Never so many brains with fruitless questions burned,
Never so many eyes with tears to heaven turned.
What must the labors of the living be,
Near such beloved, immortal company!

Today ambition cannot be the same
As in the days before death's harvest came.
The great will not be pigmies feeding self,
With eyes for nothing but for fame and pelf.
Greatness is not at ruinous costs to win
And make the best of what should not have been.
Greatness foresees, foretells the dread event,
Creating forces that relieve, prevent.
Remember—from the beast mankind is sprung,
And still beast ways are by some poets sung.
The law of eye for eye and tooth for tooth
Will not turn beasts to brother, lies to truth.
To this rule, then, adhere until the end,
Contribute to mankind more than you spend.
Expense feeds on another's time or blood,
Who gives back most of these is wise, is good.
The workers are no longer slaves, or "hacks,"
And what they say they mean, "Get off our backs!"
So for the living, there is but one creed—
Each for the world, and all for each one's need.

IV

We cannot watch all roads that death may come;
We guard the door, yet death steals in our home.
For thrust or parry with death as we will,
His blow is always last; his "touch" will kill.
No one knows death except those death has taken:
Grief fears to feel lest she to madness waken.
Grief dare not babble of the pangs she feels,
The world runs on; Grief stumbles at its heels;
Builds in her breast a prison for her woes
And through the years a silent jailer goes.
We cannot watch all roads, but one we can—
The birthplace and the fortress, too, of man.
The home at least should save the lives it rears,
While science strives to add to mortal years.
Youth is a pessimist: at life it rails,
Plays with self-slaughter and its sire assails.
To death youth plunges in war's sudden strife,
Before it learns the value of its life.
The fault is with the fathers. Life they know,
But would stay longer at its pleasant show,
Heap up more wealth though famine feed their store,
Deaf to God's threat—"Your sons must pay the score."
Pride of courage, greed of greater gain,
Hides the high price and the eternal pain.

A tithing of the brains it cost to win
Would have insured our times against this sin,
Had brains sought to supply the needy's dearth,
Nor reddened battlefields to rule the earth.

V

I used to read names in Memorial Hall
Of students who for freedom gave their all,
At Gettysburg or in the Wilderness,
A boy, I gazed and dreamed, but must confess
They seemed like heroes of Achilles' time—
Unlike us, distant, of a race sublime.
But now new names for that famed wall appear
How young, how full of human hopes, how dear!
Saviors of savior nations—theirs the high course
Of victors over tyranny and force.
Yet one who from my far-off time returns
Must have permission to erect two urns,
Where Bacon's name and Roosevelt's name should be,
Apollo, Mars, in my mythology.

VI

We grow in soul and consciousness
Not merely when we eat, sleep, dress
And pass the time,
But when foes of mankind we meet,
Pray, struggle, starve, nor know retreat.

—For cowardice is crime.

Where battlefields their terrors hurled,
And where brave thought rebuilds the world,
There soul is born and grows.

So age like youth
Still worships truth,
And deathless spirit shows.
Proud youths who thought your duty done
When you came home,
More glorious duties have outrun.

A vaster heaven you find to dome
The larger world we all demand.
Yes, bigger than our native land,
Where all may have a chance to be
Children of one divinity.
The home you left is not the same,
“What’s wrong?” you ask, “Who is to blame?
I left my home a thoughtless boy,
Now a man’s powers I would employ.

Some newer need prompts me to ask
No useless job, but a real task.
Yes, France and Belgium to restore,
But to all men give more.
Bestow not only home and food,
But in all hearts true brotherhood.
What's home, except the happiness
Of knowing that your deeds will bless?
A trench—a prison—where'er you roam
In God's behalf is home."

VII

Honor the victor! Let arches endure,
Noble as those in Rome,
Though the forms of the dead; the eyes of the poor
Have veiled his joy of home.

Build him a home that can never decay,
In peace or war, in youth or age;
One that will last him a year and a day,
A deathless war to wage.

What is the task can absorb his full powers?
Mankind—their tears, their prayers—
Quench them, answer them. Lift him who cowers;
Cheer him on who dares.

What have we learned in this world of blood?

For soon we may profit by it.

Famine that slays is not lack of food,

But of money to buy it.

The gods—do they, grieved and weary, nod?

Has a race of old men arisen?

Are our bravest buried beneath the sod?

Are our deepest hearts in prison?

O victory bringing triumphs, breeding fears,

O victor whose lips are dumb!

Do you see no peace in future years,

But terrible days to come?

No! if conquest be not domination,

But adoption of those we defeat

If our toil be a new creation,

A brotherhood complete.

Ad Matrem

EIA, MATER, FONS AMORIS.

I

O Christ, you left not even Cynthia.

The stars are empty now,

Their gods and goddesses are gone.

In leafy glade, on shadowy hillside are

No longer nymphs at play,

Thy sorrow-saddened brow,

The tree you died upon,

Frightened those happy ones away.

Bacchus' exulting crew,

Scorned, fell back from you;

White Aphrodite withered back to foam.

What hast thou brought instead?

All men could pour the lustral, pleading wine

And bear a gift to Hercules' thronged shrine;

Or love, forget and rove

In Cybele's dim grove.

All maids could follow where Adonis led,

In verdant meadows plumed with iris roam,

And laugh and dance and sing

Prinked out with buds of Spring.

Calm priests could slay a lowing hecatomb;
Youths look with wistful eyes,
That longed and might espy
A sweet form glide into her fountain home;
Or hear the quick-drawn breathing of a race
And turn to meet the glory of Apollo's face.

II

What has thou brought? Where is the waving throng,
Bright eyed, with loud hosannas and shrill song
That strewed torn palms before thy regal way?
No cymbal's clash or shouting train,
But tears and moans, reproach, disdain,
Until the end on Calvary did stay.

Art thou our God and archetypal man?

As ages pass must we forever scan

Thy cross, with drooping head and arm stretched
wide;

The thorns, thy nakedness and bleeding side;

The skull-shaped hill on which you died?

A sight that blasted Spring's blue heaven blind,
Till midnight stars, amazed, at noon-day shined;
While earthquakes disemboweled pregnant graves,
And holy things stood stark to sneering knaves—
Is that the best our eyes will ever see?
Must heaven be entered through thine agony?

What bringest thou who treadest on past joy?
As Autumn's feet o'er hill and dale
Trample the fallen fruits, the fallen leaves,
Dost lead a load of yellow sheaves?
Or drivest thou the storm and gale
Of Winter desolate and pale?
What givest thou for joys thy griefs destroy?

III

The veil is rent, the shrines in silence rest;
The sphinx, her unguessed secret in her breast,
Around whose feet the bones of wisdom spread,
No longer gives her riddle, all is said.
Nature no more her gilded net can cast,
For thou, O Christ, hast come at last.
Lo, with thee, love has come unknown before:
Not Aphrodite with her Lesbian lore
And reckless boy, blind, hapless, insolent;
But love that gains through suffering content,
Whose face the gates of death revealed,
Where Mary, mother, weeping, kneeled,
And sorrow, holding goads for memory,
And grief, marred portress to love's sacristy.
There death was changed like Aaron's rod
And man beheld blossom the love of God.

IV

All worships change, save that a son can give;
Though altars perish, motherhood will live.

A singer thou, my mother, whose soul's song
Enchants the hearts that hear.

No verse can fitly phrase

The rhythm of thy days;

Sweet rhyme has not thy cheer,

Euterpe, dear to thee, is not so strong.

Daughter of Puritans, like them as stern
To champion right, to fight the wrong.

From thy high path thou wilt not turn,

But look askance at tripping pleasure,

As though her merry dance

Could turn thy heavenly glance

From misery's full measure,

And thou forget thy errand of deliverance;

Thou fleest her caress,

Pleasure to thee is selfishness.

Yet nestling in thy strength lies ever,

Like a reflection in a river,

Sweet as arbutus underneath the snow,

Thy second self, a queen in fairy show.

Thou livest in rich thought,

That comes to thee unsought,

The unspoiled splendor of a summer day.

The common world for thee
Is hung in jubilee;
Each with his best adorns thy royal way.

V

O how can love its vision realize!
For near thee I would ever dwell,
But separation, sin and self arise
To hide thee from mine eyes.
I say "Farewell,"—
My heart foreboding falters
To take my leave of thee and happiness,
Till love, my life, its service strangely alters
And slays me by its own excess.
But no! I see a larger plan.
My love need not lament in barren days,
When hands touch not, nor fond eyes scan
The form it broods always
But cannot greet.
Where love exists all love is in relation.
So in Christ's love and loving ministry
Thou art exalted in my exaltation;
Soul touching soul I walk with thee
Alone along the crude mill-village street.
Thou art not absent, nor I desolate,
When I in heavenly love participate.

VI

Thou reconcilest me to things divine

And lead by love where feet are loath to tread;

Alluring as a rainbow draws a child,

Who, breathless, runs to grasp it, but beguiled

By its attainless beauty, still is led

On, on, in ardent quest where heaven and earth entwine.

Yes, farther still. As far

As flames the last, swift star

Upon the brink of being thou shalt lead.

If those orbs cease to roll

And all is void but soul,

In that new world, my life thy light will need.

Bright eyes and merry ways attract a boy,

And youth in these too often seeks its joy;

But manhood looking nearer

The awful spirit sees,

Then, with a vision clearer

Mere flesh ceases to please,

And in the face

It seeks heaven's grace.

Sweet face, sweet mother, I can see

To-day the world's maturity;

The gods forlorn,

The Lord Christ born,

That man might rise by thy love's regency.

The Cambridge School*

I

THE PLACE.

Elm-shaded town where poets thrive,
And life is thought or laureled song;
Strife hushed except when ideals strive,
Far from rough contact with the throng!

Broad meadows, tall groves famed for birds,
Still streets where brooding scholars walk,
Plain buildings, shrines of deathless words,
Small homes, fond scene of fruitful talk!

I've stopped and looked across yon wall,
On graves whose names will always thrill,
Of Minute-men, at Freedom's call
Who died for us, ere Bunker Hill.

Ah! here, indeed, is holy ground!
Stern school of new apostolate!
Where Freedom lives, there Truth is found;
Near heroes' graves, men should be great.

* Read at the Fortieth Anniversary of the Episcopal Theological School,
Cambridge, Massachusetts, June, 1907.

Here nature, mind and art unite
To mix the air you come to breathe,
Who love mankind, grieve at its plight,
And seek those cures the saints bequeath.

Where once the rough-hewn stockade stood,
That walled our sires from savage foes,
Then, crumbling, ran to willow-wood,
Here, for God's use, these halls arose.

II

THE PRIEST.

In days when mind and men are free,
When superstition has decreased,
And business bustles charity,
What need of church? What place for priest?

His aim is not what Mather sought,
Whose pulpit ruled o'er Justice's head;
Who harried minds diseased, distraught,
And goaded souls Christ would have led.

Nor his who through May-lilacs gazed,—
With Jove-like head, sweet, sound, serene,—
And dreamed the Indians' dreams and raised
Weird woods that sighed "Evangeline."

His place is not with him who guessed
From Alpine drifts a glacial age;
Who coaxed us back to nature's breast,
Great teacher, genial leader, sage.

He is impatient of all tasks
That hold him from his fellow's side;
Would give his life, and only asks
It bless mankind as when Christ died.

He sees the laborer walk from work,
'Neath bundled, refuse wood still bent.
His heart goes with him to the murk
Called home in some foul tenement.

The coat, patched on the shoulder, tells
Loads he has borne and still will bear.
He loves his haste, laugh, dirt, pipe-smells
And form refined by slender fare.

Where pain is found, there he is found,—
His pleasure to bring pain release:
Where sin, shame or despair abound,
He hungers to speak pardon, peace.

His visions mingle with men's deeds;
Mould sculptors' clay, halt feet that err,
Give souls to bodies, worth to weeds:—
Heaven's priest, but earth's interpreter.

III

TRUTH.

Little you taught to be unlearned,
By wider study, deeper thought.
Your flame our mental stubble burned,
And left what mind and conscience wrought.

For truth is what unfetters mind;
Emboldens bosoms, builds the soul.
What makes man to his fellows kind,
And in composure sees life whole.

No Jacob's ladder,— that a dream—
Connects bare heavens with flowering earth.
On every street divine steps gleam;
For God is born in every birth.

Whose eyes have seen life burst the grave,
And soul unfold when flesh decays;
Beheld the smile that spirits have,
Who turn to us from heavenly ways.

Who looks at men with their deep eyes,
In every one a God can see.
His soul has entered Paradise;
He lives in immortality.

IV

THE TIMES.

Christ's name resounds in Gothic aisles,
In creed, in hymn, in sacrament.
His cross is worn in many styles.
Are Christ's gifts to His followers spent?

Tenacious of the form and name,
Obtuse to truth concealed within,
Monopoly of Christ we claim,
Yet still are sick, and still will sin.

Still women sell their souls for food,
And children waste their bloom in toil,
Still power drains its plenitude,
And plows the poor,—still fertile soil.

When men indifferent turn away,
And lightly live as fay or elf,
Heedless of God or man and say
"He helps the world who helps himself."

We whine: "The cold world has no heart,
We work unpraised, we work alone."
Discouraged give up man for art,
Then slave to please those hearts of stone.

We burden memory, shackle mind,
Hold genius back and scare the brave,
Make truth half-falsehood, progress bind,
At ghostly voices from the grave.

When knowledge broadening looks askance
At older stores—religion's prize—
We know its wealth will but enhance
Our spirit's worth, creation's size.

But when the church fears God revealed,
In other forms than in one man:
And sees no heaven where races kneeled
Who revered God's less baffled plan.

We turn impatient from the dark,
Of quaking hearts and little minds;
We turn and worship that bright spark
That love in every creature finds.

We leave the past; its guess, its heap
Of waste picked o'er, its falsehood taught.
Its heroes, beauty? Yes, we keep
Enshrined in life, in soul inwrought.

We sadly leave the past, like Ruth,—
Whose home was love, for well we know
Religion can be naught but truth,
And fear and falsehood naught but woe.

Splendid the hope confronts the hour!
Both mind and heart must creeds approve.
O Christ thy church will lack no power,
When love serves truth, and truth serves love.

The Radical

I stand for the man
Who cannot get justice in any court
For the poor man
Who only gets a moral lecture from the judge,—
Platitudes about the Declaration of Independence;
About one man in America having as good a chance as
another,
And a sentence for thirty days, six months or a year.

I stand for the man
Who does not like so much talk about the flag
By women who are fond of color;
By men who rob the people
And who foment war for their profit.

I stand for the man
Who is sick of this piffle
About God
From ministers and millionaires,
Who seem to own God,
He treats them so well.

I feel better for the blows I receive
As the friend of undesirable citizens.
My revolt is a little of the revolt in them.
My insults are a part of the blows they receive.
If I do not explode
With as much love and hate as they do,
And get lodged in jail,
I can at least suffer a little on their account.

The Anarchist

The District Attorney snaps his jaws,
He tightens and curls his thin lips,
He scowls and focuses his ferret eyes,
He separates the prisoner from friendly aid—
He insults him, he riddles him with ridicule,
He overwhelms him with terror-breeding lies,
He plays with him as a cat plays with a mouse,
He kills him but does not eat him,—
Just leaves him dead.

I smile, Mr. District Attorney, to think
There is a thing would relax that strong mask of yours
Without the aid of whiskey.

The judge robes himself with his Gold Almighty superiority.

He is the arbiter of moral turpitude.

He is the patriot—

The expounder of the Declaration of Independence
To men who have found their way from Russia to
America by its light.

Who starve, it is true, on hopes it holds out.

His platitudes got him a job.

He plays with platitudes five hours a day.

Ha, ha, old man, I know something that would wake
you up

For a minute or two, and make you talk sense,
Then let you sleep forever.

The railroad president thinks he has his men
Where the hair is short.

They have struck

For a little more time with their families,
A little better education for their boy and girl,
For more bread on the table.

So the militia now guards the property.

Scared young fellows

Who wonder with horror

If they will have to shoot other young fellows

They went to school with

And played baseball with on vacant lots.

A bored policeman sits on the platform of the few cars
running.

"To guard the people?"

No, you Guy, to guard the cars.

Why did not the stockholders think of police protection
When the directors of the road were transferring
Millions of this precious property
To their private bank accounts;
Dumping stock on their friends and the public at high
prices?

If the policeman had clubbed the directors
At each meeting when they "obstructed traffic,"
The Receivership might have been avoided.

No, Mr. President,
You have not such a tight grip on the men as you fancy.
I know something that would loose your talons.
No, not more graft.

Dawn

Why should I not praise the dawn?
Did Vedic poets and Greek poets
Alone know its might?
I, too, have seen the dawn from India's mountains;
Flames kindled on snowy peaks,
Lone summits contagious of fire.
The swift leap of the sun downward
From summit to summit.
Across black, untrod abysses

I, too, have seen the sun rise on Greek Islands,
Where again walked immortal beauty,
Gods and goddesses
In the rosy fingered dawn.

O God, let me, too, glorify life.
Why should I not praise what daily can give joy?
Nothing exacting such joy from man
Except his wedding day.
But here for all, for life is the sun,
After the silence and shadow of night,
Creeping quietly forward,
With delicate tints, expanding and brightening.

Over the ocean comes from the east
The crimson dawn, vital as blood,
While the trees stand inert, indistinct,
Waiting to be told of new life.
Playfully letting them sleep as it speeds
On beyond them, quickening, then resting.
Rolling from the east like the hopes of man,
Waked each day to new aspiration.

How the pine trees on the eastern hill
Stand out against red and gold!
How bright and colored the mountain top,
While still its base is dark and cold!
How the water in the bay is dyed in many tints!

I know your secret, O gorgeous east.
I know your hope, O waiting earth.
That man should grow richer and stronger each day,
Matching your godlike strides,
Ruddy with health, full of gifts,
Always speeding onward, never turning backward,
Always intensely vivifying—always shining with brightness.

That man should break free from his cell;
His prison-house, his death-house,
His fears, discouragements, silences, penances, prostra-
tions.

Not creep, bent double, with the weight of inflicted toil;
But breathe the heaven of earth's daily birth,
And match the sun's unflinching march of light.

Benares

I pray for the sad souls that pray
By Ganges, the flower-strewn river,
Whose blue, gleaming waves wash away
The gifts and the sins of the giver.

As he dips himself thrice in the flood,
And drinks of it, laves in it, splashes,
Till his sins flow away like the mud
Which scours the bowl that he washes.

Through the dark palace gates of Gwalior
Throng pilgrims, their souls heavy laden;
Down, down the vast steps to the shore,
Move the elders, slim youth, jeweled maiden.

While naked bronze, pedestaled high,
Some prone or awhirl make their prayer:
Or wrapped in bright robes softly sigh
As at the broad river they stare.

Where all things are sacred save man
And woman, the meek burden-bearer;
Dream-weary and starved is life's span
And the tied shroud is burned with the wearer.

I pray that a life may appear,
Like our own born of man and of woman,
Revealing man's love for man here,
A love most divine because human:

To destroy the divisions of creed,
To frame of all people one nation,
To supply without grudging all need
And give birth to the God in creation.

I pray for the sad souls that pray
To Ganges the thrice-sacred river,
Which springs from the snows far away
And will flow with forgiveness forever.

At Delhi Gate

A blind girl grinding corn,
Beside worn women three;
Her head awlirl, her bare arms torn,
She stared at vacancy.

As fast the stones went round
She cried out bitterly,
"Why kneel I here upon the ground,
Chained to this task and ye?

"I toil but others eat,
In a world I cannot see.
I will arise from this squat seat
And end my misery."

Then one hag, brown and old,
As the wheel ground rapidly,
Toothless, her wrinkled wisdom told
The girl's dark agony.

"The blind with the old must stay.
Your sisters, child, are we.
Men mock us, turn their heads away
And feed us grudgingly."

The girl knelt stiff with rage,
As hooded cobra crests.
“I, sister to your palsied age!
See, have I shriveled breasts?”

The next said: “I have learned
This world was made for men.
A woman’s soul by heaven is spurned.
Why will you chatter then?”

The girl sank back. Her moan
Was like a lost soul’s cry.
“On earth no lover have I known.
Is there no love on high?”

The third spoke, swift her wheel,
The smooth meal slipping fast:
“Like you at these hard stones I kneel,
Like them my youth is past.

“The fields throb warm with sun,
Cool waters fill the well,
The nibbling kids by their mothers run
And sweet the mangoes smell.

“Like poor beasts, trees, and fields,
We must give something, too.
Child, since all life an increase yields,
Let God give bread by you.”

The blind girl grasped her wheel.
“Smooth kids! sweet mango-tree!
Great Lord, whom none can see or feel,
I’ll live and toil for thee.”

The Awakening Soul

I

As a new spirit grieving,
Heaven's hosts are just receiving,
Pure from cold Death's dumb shrieving,
Peers through the City gate;
In spite of her fresh wonder
At sight of that life yonder,
Her wish for earth flames fonder
For one now desolate.

II

She longs for earth and turning,
Looks down where tears are burning,
Where laughter and love's yearning
Mix in the stream of life.
Where shade the sun enlaces,
Where flesh a soul encases,
Where dust a god embraces,
And man is joined to wife.

III

The arms death loosed still bind her
With bridal sweet reminder,
And the young years behind her,
 Until strange soft tears flow.
Although a spirit gleams she,
Again a woman seems she,
Until God's angel deems she
 Can then no farther go.

IV

So Psyche feels the motion
Of forces deep as ocean;
Strong, strange, sweet as love's potion,—
 Earth's pulses from the past:
The smell of soil and flowers,
Bare bathing in warm showers,
All fair things once her dowers
 In thousand strange forms cast.

V

She looks down in dejection,
 Bowed by the stern perfection
 Of human, high election
 To life beyond the brute.
 She loves her older being,—
 So blind to heaven,—but seeing
 All life in sense agreeing,—
 All love, though love be mute.

VI

She is the crystal's clearness,
 Dense matter purged of bleanness,
 Will, moulding a new nearness,
 To man's mind and to God's.
 She is the cavern's brightness,
 The frost and snow's starred whiteness,
 The cataract's frozen lightness;
 But ever upward plods.

VII

She is the lotus-flower,
Slime-born, but rich in dower
To pierce, with prescient power
 Through every element.
Through mud she blindly passes;
Waves' cool, translucent glasses,
Past dreaming water grasses,
 To sunlight's gold content.

VIII

Free, free, she cleaves the water,
But flees as if death sought her,
For freedom sadly taught her
 To fear and watch for foes.
She sounds dark depths or lashes
Blue waves to foam, or dashes
Out of her world and flashes
 In heaven that no life knows.

IX

She is a serpent coiling,
Envenomed and entoiling
All life, or all life soiling
 At whose kiss all things die.
She is the lark in heaven,
Hymning the planets seven,
At dewy dawn or even—
 Earth's passion winged on high.

X

She feels the rough surrender
Of flesh to impulse tender,
That mate and cub engender,
 In jungles deep and dark.
She knows her own strength matches
The wild, lithe play she watches,
For each fierce thing she catches
 She strikes and it is stark.

XI

She is mankind's great mother
Men conscious serve each other,
Now call a God their brother,
 And change the world's rough face.
But Psyche on life ponders,
Pries secrets from all wonders,
In prayer the beast life sunders,
 And clears for mind more space.

XII

Fear flesh? 'Tis no temptation,
Sing soul in exultation
This heaven of creation,
 All beauty wrapped in one.
Tint, touch? A rose's petal,
Past marble or mined metal
To match, wherein is set all
 Of grace all love has spun.

XIII

Does conscience's birth distress you,
God's constant voice oppress you,
Remorse in mourning dress you,
 Till you wish God were not?
Be patient with your weakness,
God will not crush your meekness,
Forsake you in stark bleakness,
 With all your good forgot.

XIV

As leaves laugh in September,
Which fierce gales would dismember,
Leaves dead before December,
 Now clasp each tossing bough;
And bend, sway, roar with laughter,
At the mad wind rushing after,
Though it shake roof and rafter,
 It cannot strip them now.

XV

Laugh ye at hostile forces,
Unpent from lower sources,
To war on your high courses,
 And watch for your weak hour.
Laugh! Hug life as a passion,
In spite of foes that dash on,
Live in heroic fashion
 Souls over death must tower.

XVI

Your days are short, so hasten,
O architect and mason
Of life, to help the race on
 By buildings vast and free;
A palace for all people,
No roof but stars its steeple,
Where love and justice leap all
 Lower tyranny.

XVII

Say not that God sees weeping,
And wakes not from His sleeping
When man in sin is steeping,
 In sin, lean want and care;
So I will be as God is,
Men shall be as the clod is,
My hand hard as the rod is,
 No tears shall soften prayer.

XVIII

For God's tears are your own tears,
And God's care but your own fears,
Yes, God's pain what your soul bears
 Of this world's weary load.
God mourns in your heart broken,
God loves in your fond token,
God speaks when prayers are spoken
 That smooth the onward road.

The Serving Soul

What is thy errand, O soul,
Conqueror in warfare on earth, ere man;
Fusing with freedom the whole
Of earth, sea, air, fire, in thy small span;
Victory incarnate, champion, life's breath
Born on the pale lips of death.

Herald despatched from the fight,
Scathless from foes by water, by land;
Kindling the world with thy light,
Sowing earth thick with life from thy hand.
Dome with new heavens and stars a new earth,
Bring death and dark to new birth.

Finder of fire in flint;
Fuser of iron; planter of corn;
Following nature's each hint,
Whither invention and art are born.
Where is the task can surpass thy power?
Mind and its gifts are thy dower.

Conquer the nature of man,
Curious for knowledge, hopeful, fond, brave;
Battling to do all dust can,
Following fairest dreams to the grave.
Out of the mire and beast, Hail! Arise!
Be all that man can comprise.

Conquer the nature of God,
Patient, persistent, fertile, benign.
Quickening a brain, or a clod;
Seeing in evil and sin design;
Bringing to pass His eternal thought;
Scorning ideas until wrought.

Courage that conquered the brute;
Power prevailing o'er human foes;
Swiftness beyond death's pursuit;
Famine's lean pack, fevers' throes.
Danger nor hardship can daunt thee now,
Failure nor fear cloud thy brow.

Pioneer, unarmed and meek.
Bearer of seed, not seeker for gold;
Leaving behind what men seek,
Seeking what men by their sins have sold.
Ignorance, misery, share thy lot:
Honor, wealth, fame long forgot.

Sun-rise will always be young,
Dawn's star to mountain and ocean sings,
Freshly as blind Homer sung
God-trodden, deathless vision of things.
Fresh be thy thought and thy strength as the dew,
Daring and deed be as new.

Hewer of life to thy thought,
Seer of visions, dreamers of dreams,
Not less than others have wrought,
Must be thy labors; life with work teems.
Greater than Hercules' tasks are thine,
Conquer thy world,—be divine.

Look not behind thee, nor fear.
Forward be thy strong reach, thy desire.
Gaze not afar, peer thou near.
Truth is whatever soul can inspire,
Golden those ages the world will see,
When man from fear shall be free.

Plant if thou never may'st reap;
Build if thou never enter therein;
Gain though the heavens forbid thee keep,
Pray though thou only repeat thy sin.
Love though thy love be answered by hate,
Will though thou wrestle with fate.

The Wakeful Bride

The old earl lay in his restless bed,

His fair bride by his side.

The young page gazed from the outer tower,

And all their eyes were wide.

Their eyes were wide though the bell had tolled

Long since the midnight hour,

And the moonlight lay as bright as day,

On moat and wall and tower.

For the moonlight slept in the garden-close,

Whence dreamy perfumes blew,

That filled the page with memories,

And wishes vague and new.

Oh! a summer night is as dread as a ghost,

To hearts that lack their desire;

For it tells of death, but it wakes to life

The smouldering heart's pent fire.

The old earl saw a ghost that night,

The ghost of his youth long spent.

Proud tourneys, battles, far crusades,

Before his dim eyes went.

And he thought,—I would I were that page,
So young, so strong, so gay:
He sleeps like a log the longest night,
And sings like a lark through the day.

But the earl wished only to sleep and forget
The weight of his wrinkled fame,
And the weary days, and the nerveless toil
That guarded his ancient name.

Or he waked and wished for the crimson east,
And the breeze that comes with the dawn;
And the rising mist from meadow and lake,
And to know that the night was gone.

But the page he gazed at the garden-close,
Below the outer tower;
At its moonlit walks, at the bench by the pool,
At the shadowy red-rose bower.

“How strange,” he sighed, “that we are here
Beneath the selfsame roof,—
I in my tower, you with the earl—
Yet heaven holds us aloof.

“But youth is youth and age is age,
And I, if I were he,
Would know the joy the angels know,
And join their minstrelsy.

“I’d kneel beside your snowy bed,
And kiss your arms and your hair;
I’d watch by your side till you waked at last,
And smiled to see me there.

“And hand in hand the livelong day,
We’d wander without fear,
In fields and woods, or sit and talk
And laugh to be so near.”

Oh! a summer night is as dread as a ghost,
To lovers who lack their desire;
For it tells of death, but it wakes to life
The slumbering heart’s pent fire.

And the little bride, the bride of a year,
Lay still, tear-stained and white,
And she thought of the earl and the home she had left,
And she thought of the page so bright.

“Alas!” she thought, “I have flown from the fields
To a cage.” Then for fear held her breath.
And the moth that fluttered in from her flowers,
Brushed her face for the face of death.

“Ah me! if a baby gladdened my breast,
Then I like a bird would sing;
And night and day and year upon year,
Each some new joy would bring.

“A boy like the page, yes, that should he be,
So noble and straight and strong.
I’d work for him, I’d fondle him,
Dear God, must I live long?”

Oh! a summer night is as dread as a ghost,
To souls that have missed their desire;
For it tells of death, but it wakes to life
The smouldering heart’s pent fire.

A City of Mills

I cross the bridge and take the road,
Climb the short hill and then look back
Upon the river bare and broad,
Ploughed by a steamer's foaming track.

Across the seamed and silver bay,
Where Metacomet's paddle shook,
Now darkening with the ebbing day,
In wondering joy and fear I look.

The western sky above Mount Hope
More painted than red warrior's pride,
Brightened the city's busy slope.
"Is this my country's fate," I sighed?

I heard the chimes from towered height,
I saw below the dark mills lie,
Prolonging day with puny light,
Like mirrors towards the sunset sky.

A giant heart throbs in those walls,
Where shuttles shoot with deafening din;
Where ears hear not, and no voice calls;
Where mothers weave and children spin.

Yonder the Norseman found his grave;
This soil the stealthy Indian trod,
Fighting our fathers stern and brave,
Who sought for freedom, home and God.

Now alien folk toil here at tasks
That strain the nerves to engine's speed;
The child of Puritans now basks
Mid flowers of strife, and fruit of greed.

Is this the end for which they strove?
Is this the city of their hope?
This the reward, where virtue throve,
With hate of kings, of priest and pope?

Must tyranny forever live,
With changing dress from age to age?
Virtue endure, but till God give
To it the power that roused its rage?

The sun went down, the sky grew black,
The stars, the mills, alone gave light.
As city-ward I hastened back,
I heard my answer in the night.

Your faith is larger than was theirs.
You trust in God with less of fear.
You know He for all children cares,—
The heathen far, the Christian near.

That priesthood cannot bind time's feet.
That greed cannot enslave man's soul.
All races in the great race meet,
And that each heart must hold the whole.

Henceforth, to your faith be as true
As were your sires to their harsh creed.
The savage, tyrant, priest in you
Slay. Be brother to all in deed.

A Nocturne

I

O maiden moon, O tender rim of light
A golden cradle on a gloaming sky;
A phoenix fluttering from a burning nest,
Above the fading fires of the west;
Brand blown from ashes where day's glories lie;
You rise, daughter of day, to rule the night.

II

Have you no mercy on that earthly maid
Who steals side-glances skyward when you're due,
And trembles if she sees you glowing there?
She loves and dreads the fortunes that you bear;
Her shoulders shrinking, her fair face askew,
To find you on the wrong side sore afraid.

III

I've watched your boat put out on flaming seas,
Along black coasts of ragged mountain tops,
Like some immortal lingering to the last.
Your low-swung sickle, sunny summer past,
Above the evening mist, guards tented crops,
While drear owls whinny in the dripping trees.

IV

O earth, is yours too squalid a domain
For this girl Queen, upon whose eyes
Deformity and darkness wrought such shame,
She could not bear aloft her heavenly flame,
She dare not in your hidden deeds be wise;
But fled, her innocence to maintain?

V

O misty, shadowy earth, what weakling wiles
Allured a heaven-born bride to stay with you?
Now longer on your dark face she can gaze,
Now fuller light illuminates your ways,
She blanches not, nor, shuddering, shrinks from view
But bravely looks on land and sea and isles.

VI

Far wandering Queen, grown now to orbéd estate!
The gabbling winds, what waft they to your ears,
From murmuring forest and from moaning sea?
The story of Endymion's misery?
That all night long you travel but to hear
A prayer poured from a soul disconsolate.

VII

Have mortal lovers guessed your wondrous plight,
(You find on earth a joy unknown above
And stay self-exiled from your native realms),
That they, at tryst with you neath village elms,
When locust's clustered sweetness maddens love,
Pass breathing deep the perfumes of the night.

VIII

I loved you best, Empress of shades, before.
Then your wide eyes would not unfurl their light
To view their heritage; earth's blatant tongue
Spoke words, told tales unknown to one so young;
Companioned by a star, you swayed the night
With bashful eyes, nor all your radiance wore.

IX

O blind me not with your resplendent power,
Who challenge heaven's high kings in sovereignty.
Those princes, banished, feebly shine afar;
For jealous of the glimmering of a star,
You reign alone and from your treasury
Unloose on earth and sea a golden shower.

X

If fairer beauty rouse me from fair dreams
To keep lone vigil while the weary sleep,
Let woven branches wrap me in their night,
Let fretted shade emboss your golden light,
Nor stand supreme, above the servile deep,
Restless beneath its robe of radiant beams.

XI

Or loom, prodigious disc, o'er city roofs,
Your brightness brooding human wretchedness,
Its huddled slumbers and brief hour of dreams.
Then pitying pour your glory and your gleams
Aslant the window of each heart's distress
And gild the pavement hushed of horses' hoofs.

XII

Can heaven not stoop to earth and heaven remain?
Can heaven not rule on earth in clean attire?
At mortal touch O must a goddess die?
Are they not deathless that are born on high,
Who are not children of the muck and mire,
But from the gods descended here to reign.

XIII

Cannot your sisters link their golden hands
And rescue you, limed in earth's poisonous reek?
Gaunt death must be divine if you can die;
Sin be eternal that can mount the sky
And kill where love is strong and hate is weak.
Can earth's disasters reach such distant lands?

XIV

Pale maidens mad for motherhood mock you,
With self-slain youths frenzied by love's starved doles—
Sad faces sucked beneath your crawling seas.
These mock you, dying with the pangs of these,
A wan proccessional of leaf-blown souls,
Fading from form, whom horror's hounds pursue.

XV

O let at dawn no most untimely song,
Of some sweet bird impatient for the day,
Awaken me to mourn at your sad end.
Your withered form your guards will not defend,
They see the sun's shield gleaming far away,
They hear his car fast thundering along.

XVI

But fetch me from the East an opiate,
Lest, luckless, I espy you meet the fire
That gave you life and now at last returns,
That gave you life which now it fiercely burns.
Like morning mists, you, too, must needs expire
And round the circle of your mortal fate.

Ellis Island*

How can we turn back to the ancient world,
With all its wealth of wisdom, beauty, soul,
Or take the time to listen to its talk;
Descend the tomb's steps to behold the past,
And grope forgetful in another age,—
Exiles ourselves from this tumultuous scene,—
Instead of hastening to our sunlit hills?
Time! time! O give me thy firm hand;
Pluck not away thy strength till I am strong,
Until my voice shall cry to all the world,
The truth of men's new hope, new power, new love:
That man was made not for these miseries
In which the past and present cumber him:
War's brutal harvesting of all fond hopes,
Which sweeps away the smiling grain around
The little home, and withers up the heart;
Which turns to snarling brutes God's likeness in the flesh;
Tears down the soul built up by household love,
Mashes men's bodies to manure their fields.
I would not see the suns of other climes,
Nor peer for pleasure in the ancient world,
While this procession vast, of men alive,
Gifted and awed by life, pours past my door.

*Ellis Island in New York Harbor is the landing place for immigrants.

Whither, O whither, are these millions bent?
I know not though I see their partial goal,—
A noble destiny of love-linked lives.
Take, take me to your eager company,
To share your inextinguishable hope
Of heavens on earth, of freedom, joy and love.
O let me link my destiny to yours!
Pluck up my life from sterile roots and soil;
Transplant it to your deep fertility,
Within the hearts and lives of such as ye.
I will not stop, no, not if Homer call,
Or Sophocles or Caesar, aye for Dante, no!
Though Shakespeare gaze at me with Prospero's eyes,
I will not turn for hosts of sceptered kings
Who knew the pride of place far separate
From humble struggle for God's daily bread.
Their time was theirs and all the world
They could compact within their minds array.
Our time is ours. But how brief it is
And pregnant with the fate of centuries!
My eyes shall only see your holy hope,
Your far crusade to win no tomb, but homes.
Your vast adventure seeks to win no palm
Or pardon for its sins, like old crusades;
Or heavens enskied beyond the bounds of flesh,
But human homes and human happiness.

For you the Past has failed,—
Asia, Africa and Europe failed,
And all great states,—
France, England, Germany and their allies.
All, all have failed to give to you a home,
Content and honor, growth and founded hopes;
Their artists, generals, statesmen left your poor,—
Gave nothing you would stay for, no allure.
You turned your back on all they showed and asked
A wilderness in which to be yourself;
A man, free from servility and free
Alike from fear of men and fear of gods;
Free footed, free of thought and free to find
The depths in soul and nature's unguessed power.
You come as awful judges of our ways;
To see if we still keep our primal gift;
Able to give to each, who knocks, his need
Of larger life, and world-wise ministry.
Or, if we dull his mind, steal labor and despise
The clasped hands of all well-wishing men,
Until we, too, are left like sinking ships
By future hordes who seek high destiny.

New Year's Eve on Broadway

Friends, what are we seeking this New Year's eve,
Crowding the sidewalks of a great city;
Waiting impatiently the midnight bells,
Slowly, solemnly sounding the hour
That ends a year,—
That begins a year?
What means this tumult of noise?
Trumpets by thousands, whistles of steam
From dark factories, steamers, ferry boats, tug boats,
Stridently batter the heavens.
My ears burst. Tense, insistent the cry—
Victory's exultation. What Victory?
Life over another menacing year;
Life over fate, mishaps, sorrow.
So we scream our joy, we challenge heaven.
Out of the battle of life we survive,
Calling for more life.
We join hands. With whom? No matter.
Young or old; rich or poor.
How that old man bounds about!
"Ladies chain," with policemen, wild girls, and bums.
Finding expression at last
Out of his dull, dead day,
His patient, meek toil.

He has suffered life like a weight.
Now he wakes, wishes, hopes—yes, and prays—
Shouts, dances, joys, fills himself with life,
Gaily in touch with his kind,
No longer grave, quiet or cold;
But a bursting blossom of life.

The Patrol Wagon

Out of the end of the wagon
Stepped the police and their prisoners.
Into the station they filed.

Laborer in jeans, strong, independent,
What have you done,
Hiding your pride by your swing?
No fellow you for the filthy tramp,
Shambling behind, seeming so much at home.
No fellow you for the shifty youth
Winking and grinning from sidewalk to door.

What you did I must know.
I arrested you—I, a citizen.
No, not with my hands, but my agents,
Policemen in blue, now guarding you.
Brutal, impertinent, knowing their power,
Burly, armed with revolvers and billies,
Backed by their fellows and what is called law.

Well—the door shuts—the crowd disappears.
The wagon goes back for new loads.
Placid, composed, the driver his horses turns
And lo! in their mild eyes and gentle forms I see
The only loving appeal
In all this picture of woe.

The Slate

World empires are to God but school-boys set a task.
Their task to learn how mankind can find joy;
Can best arrange to live in mutual love,
Giving to all health, justice, mind.
How best to rule all nature for their power;
To serve themselves and lift man from the brute.
But when the answer comes before God's eyes,
So far from right, with centuries to try,
He washes the soiled slate clean of the imperfect work,
And Revolution summons a new class.

After Forty Years

I have loved your face for many a year,
My dear.
Your sweet girl face has never changed,
Nor your heart ranged,
Always the same
For me to claim
And always near.

Ours was a mercenary match.
They say I bought you.
I call you rather "a lucky catch."
You were knocked down—I caught you.
No van nor villain gave the knock.
I grabbed you from an auction block.
A high-brow place for us to meet
In an art store on Tremont Street.
I was twenty—you sixteen.
Another case of "might have been."
You were a peasant girl and I
"A judge"—of what to buy.

Yes, I gave you all I had—
My own—I dared not call on dad.
The bank cashier thought I was mad,
For I drew my last dollar.
How I trembled at each bid,
My rivals, with large bank accounts,
I glared at till they thought I'd pounce.
My fright by a grimace I hid,
As your price grew taller.
Had their bids gone a dollar higher,
You'd smile now by another's fire.

Now I am sixty, what of you?
Dear Viennese, child to my view?
If living, what? Did your sons fight
In the Great War? Your grandsons might.
Have they been starving? Have they been shot
For pleading for the common lot?
What terrors may have laid you low,
In a grave where myrtles grow.—
But the fair child is all I know.
Still from my walls
Sweetly your girl face calls,
For that is all I know of you—
Alas!—adieu!

The Hearth Song

I am the hearth-fire
Hear me roar and hiss;
Hear me crackle and snap;
Feed me that I burn.

Come near to me for warmth,
Shy lovers;
For mutual vows and cozy joys,
For heat fiercer than love.
Gaze deep and see your dreams.

I hold to the solid earth.
I leap to the sparkling stars.
I do both at once.
That is my way of loving.
Is it yours?

Furiously I flame,
I dart upward.
My thousand ruddy swords flash;
Dipped in life blood.
I flicker, I escape, I die.

Ha! Ha! your little loves!
Short-lived are they as I.
Are they as bright and pure?
Are they as red and hungry as I?

Spring

Bird at my window,
Why dost thou sing?
Thought thou the spring
Came with the dawn's glow?

Thy song so sweet
Opened my eyes,
With glad surprise,
May buds to greet.

It is as yesterday,
Not warm for long,
So cease thy song,
'Tis winter not May.

No, no, sing to me,
For it is spring;
If thou can'st sing.
Sing on full cheerily.

The Search

I once adored a woman's face
And manly beauty gave me joy.
But why delight in human grace?
How soon it fades! How frail a toy!

Once I saw heaven in sunny fields,
On ocean's shore, on mountain sides.
A mystic light nature still yields;
But not for long man's sorrow hides.

Dear saints—a few such souls I've known—
Have shared with me their peace and light;
But they have seemed so strange, alone,
They gave me no prolonged delight.

While of all these I make complaint,
Still, still I seek a beauty rare,—
Of face and form, of nature, saint,—
But most a world redeemed from care.

Loss

She said: "Let my body be burned!"
Her beautiful body be burned!—
The body lips burned to kiss,
Let flames devour.

The head no empress could match,
The heart so true to love,
Silent to woe, still to wrong,
Consumed in flame.

I weep not now at her death.
I weep that no lover had filled
The need of her heart, so that she
Longed to lie by his side in her death.

The Boy

Why is it that mother
Can always wake up early and call me
When I have to get up
At four o'clock or five o'clock
Or any old time,
To go fishing;
Or if I have to catch a train,
To go out of town early for a football match?
How is it that she can have a warm breakfast for me to
eat?
How is it that she of all the house is wide awake?
Dear, sleepless heart of my mother!

The Garden Walk

You planted lilies and iris—both are here.
Your roses and your poppies come each year.
 Straighter than iris;
 Sweeter than roses red;
 Purer than lilies;
 Heart's blood poppies bled;
Where do you tarry, dear?

I thought I wanted an old garden walk
Along which you and I could stroll and talk,—
A red brick walk with peonies on each side,
Rose peonies, white, red and open wide.
 I have my walk and peonies, too.
 But where, dear soul, are you?

The peonies multiply their buds and blooms.
They fill with heavy fragrance all my rooms.
But on the walk your step is never heard.
Your music-freighted lips send from the tomb no word.

A Composer

He heard a music that he could not snatch
From moods' and muses' fitful higher flight.
He wrote the lower strains his ears could catch;
But in despair, his name he would not write.

He died. His sweet unfathered songs survived,
True, human voices of the life that is.
Men praised: but only knew the name contrived
To hide a grave's enduring melodies.

The Wanderer's Song

My garden is the road-side free,
No seed my hand has planted;
But there all flowers bloom for me,
As in a land enchanted.

My own I do not leave behind,
When far from home I wander,
For where I pass, my own I find,
A wealth I cannot squander.

Substitution

The tears that my own eyes have shed
Are few to all the tears I owe
For sin, pain, wrong, and for the dead;
Let me not cause thy tears to flow!

For thy sweet eyes can shine most bright
Without the gems that sorrow wears;
Thy radiant soul must not requite
My enforced usury of tears.

The Band

The band stops playing that gaily led
And thrilled the troops with faith sublime.
Sharply one drum-tap sounds instead
To keep the tired feet in time.

Love stops its music-march of life,
High-stepped, triumphant, brave and clear.
What then spurs soul to rescuing strife?
Justice' one stroke it still can hear.

A Tapestry

Love met Medusa on the Libyan plains,
Whose serpent locks dart death at them that see.
"Ah, boy," she cried, "the cause of all my pains,
At last sweet vengeance I can wreak on thee."

Love looked nor faltered at her horrid gaze.
She tore her hissing hair to strike him dead;
But where her wild blows fell, to her amaze,
Red roses burst in bloom. Love laughing fled.

A Call to Prayer

From the minaret the Moslem

Bids men pray. "Let all work wait."

North, south, east and west he calls them,

"God is one and God is great."

Far below a woman blesses

God in new-found motherhood,

Singing to the babe she presses,

"God is love and God is good."

The Musician

There was a good musician,
Who loved a lady fair,
And like a great magician
Could charm her every care.

He deeply loved the lady,
And when death closed her eyes,
For months no music played he,
But gazed into the skies.

At last his sombre spirit
Awoke and talked with hers:
He plays and she can hear it.
Ah! how his music stirs!

The Golden Cross

A golden cross, lifted so high,
Above the noisy thoroughfare,
That rarely did a wandering eye
Discover that a cross was there.

But wreathed around it prayers arise,
And heavenward human songs ascend,
While motionless against the skies,
Its silent, golden arms extend.

Upon it morning sunbeams flash,
About the dark form star-gleams play;
The wind and rain against it dash,
Yet there it stands unmoved alway.

Lilacs

A welcome of great lilacs at the gate,
A purple arch, a dense screen on both sides.
Lilacs, lilacs, whom do you await?
The house is empty your profusion hides.

Young lovers used to pluck you as they passed.
Your perfume, sweet as love, May breezes blew.
Ah, noble lilacs what romances last
In your great height, fragrance and purple hue.

You live and bloom when what you loved is gone.
You stand your ground and grow when no one cares.
I grieve the garden waste you look upon;
The burden of the past your perfume bears.

The gate now lies unhinged, yet no youth comes
With quick drawn breath, on fire to learn his fate.
Did dreams come true of love, achievement, homes—
Sweet lilacs blooming by a broken gate?

The Sphinx

Maiden with the dreaming eyes,
Thou didst never watch the Nile;
And the blue Bæotian skies
On thy birthplace did not smile.

But the Sphinx, who formed thy ways,
Left thee heiress of her art,
Taught those questions that now raise
Terrors in thy lover's heart.

“Who will tell the dream I see,
Write the song my heart-beats sing?
He revealing this to me,
When he comes shall be my king.”

Woe to him who mumbleth here,
Words that are unmeaning breath.
Woe to him! Let dreadful fear
Hold his steps—they lead to death.

And the Sphinx with starry eyes,
Sadly sees the sons of men
Round her pathway fall and die.
How can she be but maiden then?

The Waiting Horseman

At every door where lovers dwell,
A waiting horseman stands.
One foot set in the stirrup-shell,
The bridle in his hands.

No passerby can see him there,
Nor do the lovers know.
Their blood would creep in cheeks so fair,
Like brooks beneath the snow.

Often the horseman's weary head
Droops on his horse's mane.
Now starts he up, the swift dream fled—
And tighter draws the rein.

He listens long with stern set brow,
While darker grows his face.
He now is mounted and is now
Gone, galloped from the place.

And now the door burst open wide,
The two sit there alone.
They may sit ever side by side,
But love, ah love, has flown.

Cophetua

You ask by what I was first bound
And made her slave. Don't change the name.
For it were nobler, if it were a shame,
Than king, if her I'd never found.

Those lines that frame her mouth would do.
What, never noticed them? Ah well
Perhaps 'tis best; for who can tell
I might be asking now and you. . . .

O, don't protest! You think 'twas odd?
What saw I in the lines? More prayer
Than such young little lips could bear,
Perhaps—enough, you laugh and nod.

That all? Ah no they tell of care.
A baby brother carried long
On weary arms, lulled by a song
So sweet it left its imprint there.

A father coming home at night
From work, kissed at the open door
By two glad lips. Shall I say more?
Why two lines bound me round so tight.

The Last Gift

What can he give who has given his all,
 Thrown his one wreath when the curtain arose?
 Hands, must they lag when the heart overflows,
Empty of gifts at the curtain's last fall?

What can he give who has given his heart,
 Wagered for love all a lifetime can gain?
 Henceforth is all he would offer in vain—
Fruitless since all was bestowed at the start?

Gone is his wreath; but he joins with the rest,
 Gilding his laurel with loudest encore.
 Lost is his heart; who, then, fain would give more,
Tested, triumphant, can cry, "Love is best."

At The Musicale

She touched my hand as the singer sang,
A pressure, and that was all.
She knew the music would bring a pang
To my heart and its griefs recall.

And no one saw her touch my hand,
Save the singer, of all the throng,
Who sang like one of God's angel band;
For he put our love in his song.

He told me love lives by hope alone,
By faith that a heart is true;
That love by night must weep and moan,
And restlessly suffer the long day through.

He said her touch meant her pure soul
Was whispering close to mine:
"Be strong! If here this is the whole,
In heaven I shall be thine."

The Sea Garden

TO ELLEN PAINTER CUNNINGHAM

You snatched your garden from out the sea;
You fenced in your garden from the wave;
But lip to lip, they seem to me,
Like lovers that contact crave.

The tulips taste the delicate foam;
The ocean quivers at perfumes sweet;
A crested wave is her sparkling comb;
Rose petals are wings for his feet.

Sea birds tempted away from the sea,
Landward lured o'er your flowers hover,
The butterfly and the honey bee,
Are lost in mists—the breakers' cover.

The heavens at dawn, sea at sun-setting,
Mantle your garden with magic hues,
Flame seizing on it, stays forgetting,
Till earth locks tight what the heavens lose.

What Will Love Do?

What will love do when lips are dead;
When greetings, partings, all are said;
When lingering kisses eloquence
Is vain as Persian kings' expense;
 All ashes overgrown with yew;—
 What will love do?

This flame we feed by look and touch,
In death's eyes will it matter much?
The sense is now the spirit's lute.
If, sense destroyed, no substitute
 Shall give love voice for song anew,—
 What will love do?

Light Lingers Long

Light lingers long as Winter wears to Spring,
And O my heart can hear those choirs sing,
That break the brief spell of a Summer's night
And herald days that swoon at noon of light.
Now, though around my door cold March winds throng,
 Light lingers long.

I wake and laugh to see the yellow sun
An hour when winter nights had long to run:
And when I see where once I played the mole,
As hours of insight lengthen in my soul,
I will not chide a world of pain and wrong,—
 Light lingers long.

Shadows

If all the year were June,
 With tangled roses and the bumble-bee,
 In honeysuckle murmuring happily,
In lilies deep asleep at noon;
 While sweet birds fill the sky,
 How could I die?

If all the year were night,
 A tempest past, the pure moon shining clear,
 When all the glowing stars in heaven seem near
The slumbering earth wrapped in still light;
 When pain is hushed in sleep,
 How could I weep?

A Lancashire Lover

(At the Undertaker's)

'Tis so sudden and strange

To me.

You are used to the dead,—

Used to see

The closed eyes, to arrange

The cold hands, the stiff head.

You can't feel as I feel;

For you

Know the shrouds you will need

The year through.

You buy land, and a deal

Of trade warrants the deed.

A week since I saw her.

The night

Seems now distant as Noah.

Ah,—how bright

Was the kitchen; like myrrh

Smelled the fresh-washed pine floor.

She talked, laughed, I was dumb,
 Until,
Shamefaced, I showed the ring.
 O, I still
See her lips as her thumb
She slipped through the great thing.

For you see I told clerk
 At store,
'Twas for me, was the ring.
 Now I swore
It was big as a park,
Said a smaller I'd bring.

Then, next day, she fell sick,—
 A maid
With no home of her own,
 Though she prayed,
Yet they sent her off quick
To the work-house, alone.

While I laughed o'er my loom,
And felt,
Now and then, for the ring
'Neath my belt,
Wishing week-end would come,
Little dreaming the sting.

Planned the house we should have,
We two;
Carpet, table, chairs, stove,
What we'd do:—
She lay dying, the grave
Was a-beckoning my love.

Aye, she died more of shame?
'Tis like.
I'll complete here my vow.
I could strike:—
But 'tis useless to blame!
May she have the ring now?

Compensation

When gallant robins sing
Through loosened sweets of Spring,
As you plod off to work,
Wish not to change or shirk
The day's routine, dear soul;
 But view the whole.

When moon and stars shine bright
Some night, some summer night,
And weary, you must sleep
And cannot vigil keep,
Sigh not, alas! dear soul;
 But view the whole.

When music's choirs complain
In melancholy strain,—
“All beauty must decay,
Let love then seize the day.”
Fear not such loss, dear soul;
 But view the whole.

When pleasure bands you see
As you go thoughtfully,
Cast down by sin and woe,
Long not their joy to know.
Love thine own tears, dear soul,
And view the whole.

“What is the whole?” you ask,
“The face within the mask?”
That beauty’s self you are,
When ruled by duty’s star.
Not to enjoy, but be, dear soul,
That is the whole.

November

I push in my house-door wide.
The fallen, sear leaves outside,
Aswirl in the autumn wind,
Like stealthy souls that have sinned,
All shrunken and hectic, dry,
Outstrip me and hasten by
O'er vestibule, hall and stair,
They rattle and battle there;
As if to forsake the dead,
The swift coming cold, the dread,
To flee from the Winter's storm
And tawn on the live, the warm,
In search of the fire's glow,
The Summer dead long ago.
But I—I must close the door,
Across the bright, leaf-strewn floor.
The leaves underneath my feet
Must wander again the street,
From hearth and from heart swept away;
Or, I perish, too, as they.

Behind The Lotus-Flower

Behind the lotus-flower the treasure lies,
In white and gold pagodas Burma builds
To great lord Buddha of the eight-fold way.
Not in the dirt where alien soldiers dig,
Nor far above where purest gold caps all;
But in the midst behind the sovereign bloom,
There lies the treasured image of the God.
Then seek not, brother, for the gift of gifts,
Thy life's sweet secret, solemn and so brief,
In things below, though lovely is the earth,
Nor in the heavens, though lofty is the sky;
For in thyself the richest wonder lies.

The Lover

I love her body and her soul,
 But I must choose.
Alas! her heart, it is so kind,
So sweet her body, pure her mind,
 I would not lose
A petal of the perfect whole.

Her gentle spirit wounds her flesh,
 She feeleth woe
So keenly. Sorrow, pain and sin
Gaze at her all bright within
 And grieve her so,
Tears mar the body's golden mesh.

Her face is fair as temple gates.
 I linger there
And look and love, then reverently
Pass in, the fairer soul to see;
 Nor may compare
The door to what within awaits.

For there are angel choirs heard
 And heaven's appeal.
There jeweled windows, mystic sight,
Reveal their beauty and the light;
 So there I kneel
Me down and—*worship*—is the word.

Hero At Sestos

Will he not come tonight?
Moon and ye stars, shine bright,
Tell him to come tonight.
For my heart yearns for him,
And my brow burns for him;
His voice will rule it,
His kiss will cool it.
How can his heart be cold
When mine is uncontrolled?
Or his glance not reply
To the love in mine eye?
O, if such things can be,
End, heart, thy misery.
If he though far away,
Voices did not obey,
Voices of sense that tell
What my heart cannot quell—
Its longing, its yearning—
Did he not turning
Come to me never so far—
Then, cloud ye, moon and star;
Let him not come tonight,
E'en though my heart might—
Hark, heart! Whose step is this?
Foolish heart, why doubt thy bliss?
Doubting lips may kiss—may kiss.

Fuji-Yama

I turned, and seeing Fuji, thought I dreamed:—

A mountain in the moon, so far and white,
So white and still, slow motioned towards the sky,
So strong on earth, so merged with all above.

No ragged strife of summit cut the heavens,
No agony of struggle petrified,
Nor humble head bowed by the glacier's hand.

Why vex with thought, when Fuji sits serene?
Why fret and fume, when his white head is cold?
Why fear, when he so near to heaven, is calm?

Burd Helen

Wan maid, what is your woe?

Beside his horse you go

Awearily.

Clasp her, O cruel knight,

Upon your steed so white;

Speak cheerily.

O'er bare, sad moors you roam,

Girl page. Where is your home,

Your kith and kin?

Now at the water's edge,

Alas, he gives no pledge.

Black death and sin!

Wan maid, what is your woe?

Torn feet, dazed brain? "Ah, no!

Alack-a-day!

I love and am disdained,

I follow, for I'm chained.

Ah, well-a-way!"

"The pangs that pierce my side

Would stay, though I did ride

The livelong day.

Death stares if I turn back,

Death lurks along my track,

In love's dark way."

Two Roses

Were you to blame,
 Child Love,
That as they came
So merrily across the fields,
 A wild-rose-laden limb,
Teased her to pluck the flower it yields
 For him?

Did you then pull,
 Boy Love,
Your small hand full
Of petals, dropping one by one
 O'er your palm's crumpled rim,
Until you left the husk alone
 For him?

What a prank you played,
 Fie Love!
Another maid
Laughed out, "Wilt thou my sweet bud have?"
 And, then, was it your whim?
Plucked out the stem the first girl gave
 To him.

The Rug

O Siva!

Beat my soul like a rug

Spread on the grass,

Struck by tough saplings,

Till it wrinkles and writhes,

And the dust rises,

Blown off by the wind.

So make my soul clean,

Yes, soft for thy feet,

O Siva!

The Past

O for the songs that maids sang in times past
 To ease their hearts;
Sang in the Spring,
When rivers flow again,
When violets bloom and phœbes build their nests!

O the bright eyes and hot cheeks
 Awaiting young lovers,
In summer dusk,
When work was done,
And cattle crunched the corn in stanchioned rows!

Faded the eyes and cold the cheeks;
 Ceased is the singing.
The rivers flow,
The dark falls;
But the girls do not come.
God, what have you done with their love!

The Mourning Lover

"The fields of May are fresh and green
Where children circle round their 'queen'
The ordered orchard's blossoming trees
Are robbed of sweets by murmuring bees."
But when they told him this he saith,
"I'm dreaming of the fields of death."

"Your friends are following the May;
Enwreathed they dance; in sunshine play.
All life and love are at their prime,
Come, choose your love in love's own time."
But when they told him this he saith:
"My love is walking now with death."

"Ah, do not mourn, for you are young.
Come and be gay, your friends among.
For all the joy of life is love,
As poets sing and age can prove."
But when they told him this he saith:
"Will she, then, find no love in death?"

O Tell me where she walks today,
When all your hearts burst with the May!
O tell me, if in some high sphere
She finds the love she sought for here?
If this you cannot tell, he saith,
"Then leave me to my tryst with death."

Three Baby Verses

To Muriel Groff

I

Far away, far away
On a bank one summer's day—
The warmth of the grass is the warmth of the sun,
And lazily the river doth run—
Which way!

A floating beetle, a bit of grass,
Watch and you will see it pass.
The blue of the sky,
So deep doth lie—
It doth stay.

Hear! hark! 'Tis the catbird's mew,
In the alders hid from view,
Bound with clematis all through.
"Summer's heat and summer's sun,
Joy, joy, joy"—her song is done.
Hush! that splash is a hungry trout;
Dozing waterbug look out,
And the ripples circle and cease.

II

The moon shines so bright,
The stars have ta'en flight
For the little stars say,
"Why 'tis bright as the day;
Let us off and away.
The earth will not miss us,
Love's kisses delicious,
Tonight will not kiss us.
To the moon is each vow,
By the moon all will trow,
To us none will bow.
Let us cover our eyes;
Let us sail o'er the skies,—
And sail and sail and sail,
And dream, nor hear earth's wail;
And dream nor see night pale."

III

By the summer roadside
In bushes huddling,
Three children I saw,
Scared by the motor's rush,
With sweet faces peering
As we went by;
Confronting fears and danger,
With loveliness of mien.
What can the world dash at me
With dangers and power to kill,
That I should not confront
As simply and sweetly as they?

Tankas*

I

Wondering I heard
Glorious Nikko's temple bell
Sound through ancient groves.
Questioning, I learned its bronze,
Vibrant, was mingled with gold.

II

Harshly loud the key
Shrieked as it locked tight his tomb;
But from a pine bough
Sweetly a robin's song trilled.
Widow, yes, clasp close his child!

III

Fields and hills I saw,
Staked out in lots, paths and ponds—
A cemetery.
Soon I passed again and found
Populous homes of the dead.

IV

Into my room flew
Once in the spring a song-bird
Dazed with joy of dawn.
But in the fall, on my bed,
Night hurled a withered, red leaf.

*The Tanka is a Japanese form of verse which contains the equivalent in English of thirty-one syllables.

Quatrains

I

Who sees Apollo feels himself divine.

Although his life a lowly course must run,
Yet in his heart he foots it with the sun,
And circles where immortal hours shine.

II

Still yellow moon in the mist of the east

You bring joy.

Love a sad heart from vain hopes has released.

Kindly boy!

III

Above all cities arch the skies,

Beneath them bends the ground:—

Nature enough for any eyes,

If they will look around.

IV

Young Cupid flies in foul and fair,

In rain and shine he gathers spoil.

What does he for the weather care?

Sweet boy, he has no clothes to soil.

Neglected Pastures

This is a legacy of love
To earth's unplowed fields,
Where only weeds grow,
That when I am dead
They'll know that they have lost a friend.
These untilled fields,
Unvisited
Except by birds, butterflies and bees.

I loved
These tough, rank, vigorous growths
On stony hillsides,
On damp, undrained bottom land,
Unharrowed, cropless,
Their rough, uneven surfaces and broken down walls.
No fertile fields with scarecrows guarding them
Have pleased me more
Than tangled fields
Of deep purple iron weed,
Of pink Joe-pie weed,
The elderberry's royal hue,
The jewel weed's orange drops,
The hog plant's flame,
The butterfly weed,
The branching wild sun-flowers,
The brown cat o' nine tails, shaped like skyrockets,
Amongst plumed grasses,
Picked out with drooping red lillies.

Sonnets of Seasons

I

SPRING

Instead of thinking man were I a tree,
When barren Winter's snow-wrapped slumbers break
Upon a world of verdure, I'd awake
All blossoms sweet for nestling bird or bee.
As petals fell young fruit would cover me,
Warm-ripening in the sun, till Fall would shake
My shriveled leaves, from heavy branches take
The ruddy rounds and rock me drowsily.
But lordly man whose free intelligence
Exalts him master of the earth, may show
No flower in youth, no fruit as age appears.
God grant my free mind prove its high pretense,
Nor yield returns less sure than those that grow
On each gnarled apple-tree the green earth bears.

II

SUMMER

I stand outside a church this summer day;
The sky is blue above the golden cross,
Around me purple lilacs droop and toss,
Among the trees the birds sing blithe and gay.
Through open windows floats a solemn lay,
A funeral hymn wailing a human loss
O'er a loved body, soon forsaken dross.
Hark! now the organ ceases. Hush! they pray.
O barren brightness of the summer skies!
O singing birds, and warm, sweet-scented wind!
Ye tell me not to whom those voices sound.
Fair nature, heaven enough to my poor eyes,
O bid me not in thee my joy to find!
No lasting peace is in thy beauty found.

III

AUTUMN

I walk through silent showers of golden leaves.
As startled from a dream, the bright fall'n things
Leap up and bind me in their magic rings,
Weird, whirling circles as an old witch weaves.
High up above the trees, a sea-gull cleaves
The moist, gray sky, now up, now down, nor sings
One note;—no music Autumn with her brings
Except the wind that lulls while it bereaves.
A slender elm twig, trembling with the care,
Supports an oriole's deserted nest;
The brilliant bird flies now in southern air
Where ruffling cold no longer chills her breast.
So shall the soul when frosty fall days come,
Abandon earth's abode and seek a fairer home.

IV

WINTER

I would some year my life were like this day—
This autumn day, when but a few remain
Before cold flakes descend upon the plain—
A revery with face turned back to May.
The crops are harvested and stored away,
The leaves are shed; amid the stubble grain
The bonfires smoke, like incense in a fane,
A cleansing rite the fertile furrows pay.
Earth's labor done, before December snows,
These last warm days turn back to merry Spring
And dream along the fragrant path they came.
Happy the life that pausing at its close,
Can smile upon the past without a sting,
And smiling turn to pay death's wintry claim.

An Italian Sonnet-Sequence

I

Take not your fingers from the ivory keys,
But let them linger, straying here and there;
Or let them sink melodiously where
Lie fair, locked pearls in music's sobbing seas.
We look and smile, artless of what doth please
Us, for our lips are dumb, sealed with despair
To say the happiness our mute hearts bear
And cannot tell except in strains like these.
Then go not. Hold that last note ere it flee.
Weave thy sweet themes anew, until they wind
A golden maze of dreams and harmony.
One wayward note adventurous way may find
Where timid love in silence sits enshrined,
And break his lips to song in sympathy.

II

What is the hand but a good instrument
Wherewith to fetch or carry, give or take.
Formed with no other worth, than for the sake
Of power to guide some force to mind's intent?
A worthless shell, in which a pearl is pent;
A shapely rind from which the fruit we break;
A vessel full of wears of Indian make,
Built for its cargo from the Orient.
"Why, then," cried heart, "Why am I throbbing so?"
"O, then," cried eyes, "Why do we shine so bright?"
"And I," cried hand, "Why am I satisfied?
When you but touch a lady's hand we know?"
Now, on your faith, are you consistent quite?
No gift in that small palm have we espied.

III

Though love capricious vex the dial's pace
And run or halt, but will not tamely go;
And night with all her starry signs will know,
While to the day he yields night's dreaming place;
Though from my love hope sternly hide her face,
Turning meek love away in shame and woe:
Or raze the seasons' boundaries and bestow
One wintry name on all the four embrace;—
Love, prison me, lest I a traitor prove
And don the uniform that Stoics wear,
Impervious to laughter, scorn or tears.
Were all the hours, torturers of love,
Memory a pang and onward look despair,
Still I would be thy subject, King of Fears.

IV

The Alchemist long since left his dark cell,
The cold, white ashes ceased like gold to glow.
What are these magic arts that you now show,
Transmuting life by a mysterious spell?
The rose I gave like any rose did smell.
What primal breathings through your red lips flow?
For had you dropped the flower you kissed, I know
A soul had sunk and pined in bitter hell.
O since the time you took my rose of earth
And all day long the heeded bud you wore,
No rose a rose alone will bloom for me.
For now I know the secret of soul birth,
How earthly dust may have a deathless core,
All life turn soul, burned by love's alchemy.

V

Deep inundation floods my pleasant plain,
Blotting the ordered fields from hill to hill;
The green heights lie like emeralds fall'n at will,
The gold links broken that once bound the chain.
Now foul, black clouds my sunny heaven stain,
With here and there a rift the blue depths fill.
What areas of darkness, cold and still,
Lie, trackless, 'twixt the bright stars of the Wain!
A barren desolation drowns my days:
Mere scattered peaks of time I now behold
Which mischief Love has named—Rare sights of thee.
Since, then, my life so little land displays,
Appear, I pray, as Thetis might of old,
And stay this swift encroachment of the sea.

VI

As a dark heathen, lord of captive knights,
Scowls jealous-eyed fretting lest they break free
And wreaks his hate in constant cruelty,
But spares their lives that ransom rich requites:
And when day's woes are drowned in starry nights
And their swart captor sleepeth stupidly,
Those knights, chain harnessed, wake to liberty
And tell strange tales till dawn their prison lights:
So tyrant mind permits of thee no thought,
Famishes heart, laughs at a time for love,
But teaches every hour the world's rough might.
At last when sleep steals reason's keys, gold-wrought,
And locks him safe, in dreams of thee I rove
In endless revel through the fairy night.

VII

Not for my skilless hand that fond deceit
He knew, whose pious heart kindled to paint
On high cathedral walls a deathless saint,
And for her face and form find beauty meet.
Ah, what face can his brush, bewitched, repeat,
Save hers for whom his temples throb and faint?
So kneeling ages make their holy plaint
In lowly worship at his mistress' feet.
No, my poor love must run an earthly pace,
Nor borrow adoration from a shrine
To light thy steps down an immortal way.
Yet listen, for my bosom holds thy face!
It would be holy for such love as thine,
And deathless are the hues its walls display.

VIII

What classic form can hold the restless song
That day and night the world is chiming me,
Rending my heart with its discordancy?
"Pain, pain is right; joy, joy, ah! joy is wrong."
Now on these April lawns the robins throng
And sing, "O happy love, O ecstasy."
A voice beside me mutters, "Charity."
"Yes," cowering wretch, "to one God we belong."
"Love, love, O love," all sunny places sing.
"Nay, suffer, suffer," cries each human sight,
"Thy garland be the crown thy Lord did wear."
My heart was faint at thought of suffering,
Until Love whispered: "First be my true knight,
Or pain can find no load for you to bear."

IX

The monstrous sea could well engulf the land,
Mere islands in its flood, the continents lie.
Forever with a wild barbaric cry,
It beats against the barriers of the strand,
In night's dark halls, lit up from Hesperus' brand.
A million more bright lamps could swing on high.
O'er half the earth the dust of deserts fly,
And bury blooming flowers beneath their sand.
Even so from birth until our last long breath,
Absence assails our beating hearts' frail shore,
And laughs to see love's moments wash away.
Since life and love are battled so by death,
By voids, deserts and seas in conflict sore,
Why go we separate through the so short day?

X

Death the revealer cast his portals wide,
With torch held high he peered without awhile,
Then looked toward me and with a radiant smile
He beckoned one who stood close by my side.
My tears fell down me like a sobbing tide
That mourns its ebb back from a happy isle.
With hands outstretched I paused at that dread stile;
But she he motioned tarried not nor hied.
I looked at death, but saw life's quenchless light;
Disease's havoc lay defeated, an
Immortal self, strong, loving, pure she showed.
Then spread a magic pathway in my sight,
A bridge of Chinevat, sin cannot span,
Whereon she passed within death's bright abode.

XI

As one who plays a lovingly-held lyre
Deep in the night, till dreams his lids surprise,
When his friend softly pillows him and tries
To free the fingers from the close-clasped wire
That, smitten, sounds alarm to rouse its sire;
So gently loose my love from one that plies
Sweet music for my soul—from memories,—
Vain, backward yearnings when I ought aspire.
Not as a frightened mother flings afar
A poisonous weed her little child grasped tight;
But as a mother takes her daughter's hands
That clasp a husband's neck, he pledged for war,—
So loosen love from that stern self must fight,
Aye, fight and conquer yet in distant lands.

PRESENT DAY SONNETS

The Christ

I

“A gift I have, a sore perplexity,
That pains me like a friend’s farewell embrace,
Or unavailing grief o’er a dead face,
The gift of love which Thou hast given me.
The hearts of men and women I can see:
Their hopes and transports, bright with heavenly grace,
Their sin and torture, twined with hell’s grimace;
But I am dumb to speak my ecstasy.
How can I tell them all the love I bear?
Nay, would they understand my words or heed,
What can I do this utmost love to show,—
One utterance, one deed the world can share?
Like dripping breasts my heart with love doth bleed,
O, I would die if all mankind might know.

II

“Would I could give that naked man my cloak,
And, Father, heal that leper’s foul disease,
Could blot sin from each criminal heart, could ease
The laborer’s load, give bread where starved men choke.
Would I could give them peace that are heart-broke
And pour new wine upon old losses’ lees.
At every step the needy on me seize;
My hands alone cannot lift every yoke.”
Then his soul heard: “Be rich in life, not gifts
That pass like morning dews; but give instead
A dower for all ages and all needs.
Thy soul perfect through suffering, till it lifts
The burden of a self forever dead,
From all mankind, and new conditions breeds.”

The Altar-Rail

Their hands they hold across the altar-rail,
From various need reached toward a common hope.
In scraps of prayer and errant thought they grope
A solace for their souls that will not fail.
O piteous hands! Poor, puny hands! too frail,
Were you outstretched by emperor or pope,
To grasp the titan world, with sin to cope,—
Gnarled, jeweled, soiled, thin, palsied, pale.
God fill these hands, of you they ask an alms.
The world has given, but the hands still plead;
The world has taken, you alone can fill.
O love divine, heap with hid gifts these palms.
O Christ's sweet love, supply each bowed soul's need,—
A human clasp moved by a heavenly will.

Our Looms

“Rich stuffs our looms weave for fair ladies’ wear.”
So read the caption in the daily press;
Then followed fabrics in which women dress,
Whose costly garments win a beggar’s stare.
Our looms weave? No! but men and women, where
Looms roar Niagara-like, whose strain and stress
Dull ears and eyes and soul,—a weariness
Rare pleasure cannot lift or night repair.
Our looms weave? No! but men become machines,
Which wages, dropping scanty oil, supply.
The helps mind conjured here destroy the mind;
For flesh and soul are fed to make sateens,
While spindles, shuttles, faster, faster, fly,
The brutish engine like all tyrants blind.

Street Musicians

As once a noisy car bore me along,
I met a group of street musicians. They
Were near me, but I could not hear them play,—
I only marked the influence of their song:
The violinist's eyes flash at the throng,
The harper's fingers through the dumb strings stray.
I saw the girl's throat swell, as in her lay
She found a moment she would fain prolong.
Thy saints their glorious viols strike, O Lord,
I see them stand and know they sing to me;
But life's confusion dulls my spirit's ear.
I catch, now here, now there, some broken chord,
Though my ears strain towards heaven's minstrelsy.
O give me peace that I the whole may hear!

Cuba Libre

(1898)

America, hast thou forgot thy birth,
Thy long reluctant fight for liberty,
The starved and ragged ranks that wrenched thee free,
Cheered by one nation prescient of thy worth?
Thine enemy, the captain state on earth,
Thy motherland, hater of tyranny,
Insanely ruled, held fast her child in fee
For profit,—paid at last by death and dearth.
Free land, speak thou to her crouched by thy coasts
Who would like thee be free. Yes, break the chain
A parent's proud decrepitudes impose.
Where women war than smile on Spanish hosts;
Where men despair and leave the sweetening cane,
And with their sickles hew their hated foes.

Sophocles

(1892)

O Sophocles, I would know Greek for thee
And pluck my honey from the comb the bees
From sweet Hymettus stored, where sunny seas
Murmur the measures that are joy to me.
I see the gods reign in thy tragedy:
They walk the earth and whisper in the breeze,
Thy world is full of God and suppliant knees
And righteousness controlling destiny.
But our sad times at higher beings flout;
We do not snatch from heaven to feed the soul,
We cannot find a God in anything.
So blind we do not see our torch is out,
Our torch of poesy. The rich-wrought bowl
We clasp and grope along, but cannot sing.

England*

(1909)

England, thy foes make boast of thy decline;
Thy world-wide commerce slackens its old pace,
Thy sea-girt jewel holds a second place,
Now that our masters live along the Rhine.
No! Leadership in freedom still is thine.
Mazzini, Marx—yes, Manuel, you embrace.
Prophets and kings, in exile, seek thy face
And live secure beneath thy sheltering vine.
If mind and merchants make a new race great,
That barter freedom for a tyrant's smile—
Then leap to studies; arm with conquering thought,
That nothing may destroy the only state
Where tyrants cannot reach or spies beguile
And justice is a goddess still unbought.

*On remembering how Germany arrested Russian radicals (for instance, Leo Deutsch), and surrendered them to the police of the Czar, who sent them to Siberia. Also on remembering how the United States imprisoned citizens at the dictation of Porfirio Diaz—for instance, Carlo di Fornaro, sentenced to a year on Blackwell's Island for writing about a member of the Diaz cabinet, who was driven out, a little later, by the revolution.

The Prophet

(1892)

Gold-breasted meadow lark, I heard your call
From February fields to frozen springs
Of sun and song. Amid March bourgeonings
A sparrow trilled although snow banked each wall.
With blossom-tide, now countless petals fall
Set whirling by the beat of heedless wings.
All day the phœbe to her nestling sings
And cattle roam afield, loosed from the stall.
To gloomy skies they sang—sparrow and lark,
Impelled by tides of life they felt pursue,
Till warmth and song and blossom now are here.
Cry, prophet voices! Bid the cold world hark!
Times you foretell when toil shall have its due.
Be not afraid; you lead the advancing year.

The Police Court

Are these Thy children, Lord, this criminal row,
Who in the crowded court their sentence wait,
Straining to hear the judge pronounce their fate,
And laugh or scowl or deep indifference show?
Their prison days,—that fear is all they know—
Imprisoned souls unheeding their fixed state;
Poor, sensual faces, weak and passionate,
A mark of Cain, foredoomed to crime each brow.
Ah no! Our crimes are not in birth's decree;
Our evil deeds are not the fruit full-grown
Of seedling sins set out in infancy.
We are not blown about as leaves are blown;
For our temptations tell us we are free,—
Thy children, God, since we a choice are shown.

New Hampshire

The harvest of our hills is not their corn,
Sweet maple sap, or fragrant riven pine.
These granite outcrops feed few sheep or kine;
Unshepherded the flocks by beasts are torn.
Here is no wealth by sudden effort born,
From field or forest, river, mill or mine;
Her sons for cities or rich soil resign
Their brown, bare farms, unyielding and forlorn.
But where Chocorua lifts its serrate peak
Sharp into heaven above the heart-shaped lake,
Abundant crops, unseen, clothe every knoll.
Here city-burdened lives their birthright seek;
A perfumed peace with every breath they take,—
The harvest of our hills is in the soul.

To Mme. Helen Hopekirk

I see in thee what Scotland ever gave
Her chosen children, else in gifts so poor,
The music of the mountain and the moor,
And the heart's echo her sweet poets have.
Lest music's magic should thy soul enslave,
Enkindling feelings vague and insecure,
Thy stern land gave, to make her gifts endure,
Conscience and thought deep toned as Fingal's Cave.
With music dowered, but with mind as well,
I pray thee shock the sheaves of Scottish song,
Bind with thy gold of larger harmony,
From scattered pipes symphonic strains compel,
As they who do not to our race belong,
Have waked to fame the airs of Hungary.

The White Hearse*

Death, I have walked with you through summer days,
Bright summer days, life leaping to its prime;
When fields laughed innocent of harvest time,
And you were banished from sweet country ways
Pelted with blossoms;—prone, yet strong to raise
Your head and, like your fallen parent, climb
To hellish rule in city streets. Whose crime,
The myriad children each fair Summer slays?
Man's work, this is, not God's. Him we forget,
Housing our brethren like beasts of the soil,
Of beauty stripped, of smiles, of youth, of health.
The curse of slavery is with us yet;
Which uses without love, accepts the toil,
Discards the life, and builds on blood its wealth.

*A baby dies every two minutes in America.

The White Slave

She walks the streets offering herself for sale.
Under her breath calls "Sweetheart," while her eyes
Are eloquent of all a saint denies,
And her slow feet nor pleasure nor toil avail.
So for each fragment of the night, a male
Unripe or rotten in her young arms lies
—If, uncaught, she so long her traffic plies—
Hating her bed and fearful of the jail.
With day, her work being done, her stocking filled,
She hastens home to place her piteous store
In slaver hands—lover, protector, hope.
His lust and greed her woman's soul have killed.
Slain motherhood lies pallid at her door;
And soon her other needs will shrink to dope.

Democracy

Democracy, those men have done thee wrong,
That paint thee flaunting, with a brutal face.
Not to Rome's proletarian populace,
Nor Paris mobs that round a red flag throng,
Nor London slums of saturate sin belong
Such names—deluded, pitiable race—
Though in their husky mutterings we can trace
God urging brotherhood upon the strong.
Democracy on law and virtue stands:
The home it loves and children at the knee;
Its bread it earns, its lips can speak in prayer.
Though greed and pride would bind its giant hands,
I trust the conscience of humanity,
See freedom widen in the people's care.

The Snow Storm

Nature unfettered by man's civic need,
Swirls flake on flake of wonder-working snow,
Until the city's life goes muffled, slow,
And each house worships fire—its primal creed.
Then poverty is called. Its armies speed,—
Feet tied in rags, hands bare that puffed cheeks blow—
To fight white barricades and traffic's foe.
Ho! empty stomachs! You at last may feed.
Preposterous world! The freezing serve the warm.
The laborer walks to work while idlers ride;
And thin, pinched bellies longest go unfed.
Clean streets are bare of children; foul streets swarm.
The lame run races and the blind men guide.
Great God! Is this the world for which Christ bled?

Camargo*

Carved marble face, enraptured secret smile,
In the cool foyer, silent and alone,
Outside the opera's passion-laden zone,
Unguarded yet untouched by what is vile;
Camargo, dancer, mistress of each wile
That pleased a vicious court, was thy breast stone,
When arms of laughing youths, wove thee a throne,
Scornful of pleasure who could kings beguile?
Inscrutable, fertile in joy, benign,
Compassionate of lower human need,
With lithe, ecstatic steps engendering life;
Like nature pouring a seductive wine,
Patient with sense, and folly's ignorant greed,
Knowing the soul is born in sensual strife.

*A most engaging bust of the celebrated *danseuse* used to decorate the foyer of the Paris Opera House.

Progress

I saw a leader riding. O how white!
Whiter than fear could ever paint a face,
Muter than silence born of long disgrace,
Shaven-shorn from prison rode that sick wight.
Behind him marched his followers. Grievous sight!
Small, drunken, dull, of every alien race,
Some playing fool along a public place,
Starved, striking workmen clamored for their right.
Disgrace and death, what end to leadership!
Poor knave to strive beyond what nature stands,
But breaks or rots and ends the savior's role!
Poor souls whose leaders like themselves may slip,
Whose progress is the prey of tainted hands!—
Unless disgrace and death pay God a toll.

The Pacific

Fierce courage his and will straight as a Rune,
Who first sailed these vast seas and did not tire.
Unknown to him his haven or his hire,
What reef, what race might wreck him late or soon.
Clear skies above where Venus shone at noon,
Blue waves beneath stained by an Indian dyer;
At night stars dripped from plunging spars like fire,
To wastes of water underneath the moon.
The unknown he explored, home years behind.
And what ahead, oblivious wave, palm isle?
Or, farther still, old loves endeared tenfold?
So sail my soul, a fairer heaven to find,
Whom comfort, safety cannot long beguile,
Seek new gods though you never greet the old.

Songs from the Search of Belisarius

THE KNIGHT'S SONG

My lady loves her radiant garden,
Gently moves among her flowers,—
Iris, poppies, oleander.

O the garden!

Sweet, she rests amid its sweetness,
Laughs and dreams, her face in blossoms,
While the sunshine feeds rich colors.

O the sweetness!

On the one side flows a river,
Sparkling, merry. Boats bear on it
Companies of youths and maidens.

O the river!

And she, smiling, flings them flowers,
Back they sing their answer to her,
Floating past her with their music.

O the music!

On the other side a high-road,
Toiled upon by horsemen, footmen;
Dusty travelers know that garden.

O the high-road!

And the lady gives them bounty,
Food and wine and kindly speeches,
Till, refreshed, they journey onward.

O the toilers!

So she gives the happy pleasure,
And the weary soft refreshment,
O my lady, from your garden,

Give me love!

THE GIRL'S SONG

Tell me! If you found me in a mart
In Asia, where mild-faced camels pass,
Bearing slave-girls from far-off Circass;
Tell me now, yes truly, from your heart!
As we stood there, shamefaced, meek,
 You, a prince, espy me,
Bartered for by merchants sleek;
 Would you buy me?

Tell me! If you found me where men sin
In cities; day's weary toil, at night,
Changing for unchaste, unblest delight;
Tell me as you hope my soul to win!
For what others offered you,
 Love, could you refuse me?
Spite of all that they might do,
 Would you choose me?

Dainty women, if they passed your way
Or stopped? Queens and ladies, fair to see,
Looked at you, and smiled imploringly?
Tell me, for I cannot longer stay!
Would you close your precious eyes
 Tight to their vanity,
Shapely breasts and marble thighs,
 And dream of me?

THE CYPRIOT'S SONG

Two things the gods cannot destroy,
Although they envy human joy,
And blast men's smiles,
Washing their face with tears;—
Beauty of women, that beguiles,
Strength of men, through youth's brief years;
Eyes of brightness,
Limbs of lightness.
These must the gods desire;
Or end the race they made
And quench the altar-fire,
Where sacrifice is paid.

Song from the Return of Odysseus

DORIS SINGS

When the first soul, from earth, reached the immortals,
Tearfully torn from the arms that embraced her,
Led by blind death to a world unimagined,
Fear overcame her.

Fear bowed her body, reluctant, unwilling.
Fear sank her feet in the asphodel meadows.
Fear tore death's hand to untwine his cold fingers,
All unavailing.

She had known life where the sun and the moon shone.
She had known love and had suckled her children.
She had known sleep in the arms of her husband,
And these sufficed her.

None in the halls of death bade her sweet welcome.
None kissed her lips or enfolded her man-wise,
And her cold breasts missed the cheek of her children,
There where the gods sat.

There where the gods sat grave and exalted,
On the high thrones that beheld all and ruled all,
In the gold light that diffused from their faces,
Gods who were angry.

Having sent death lest mankind be immortal,
Might laughing live, loving their busier country,
Drinking the wind and the sunlight like nectar,
Happy, undying:

Now that death brought the sad soul to her makers,
What should they do, lest she still be immortal,
Living like gods, with the gods in their dwelling?
Death now dismayed them:

Coming so blindly within their bright presence,
Standing so grimly before their gay scepters,
Dumb till the gods should decree his doings,
Death, awful servant.

Holding the soul though it trembled and shuddered,
Holding it hard when it wept and pulled backward:
Silently waiting the will of the great gods,
 Plagued by creation.

Zeus at last thundered, settling their difference.
Hermes he bade quickly bring him a balance,
Golden, the work of the cripple Hephaestus,
 Golden and even.

Then every god longed to hold the fair balance,
Gleaming, well finished, uninjured by usage,
Arbiter be for the soul's unplanned future,
 Weighing and judging.

First Aphrodite begged Zeus she might hold it,
Then would the scales mark the soul's earthly beauty.
Tempting she stood, for she knew that no creature
 Matched her perfection.

But the great father shook his curled temples,
Laughed back at sweet Aphrodite, the wave-born.
"Beauty on earth is not weighed in the balance
Of heavenly beauty."

Then bright Apollo, god of all gifts of mind,
Who gives the Muses divine inspiration,
Whose fiery car the full-limbed Hours follow,
Reached for the balance.

But Zeus forbade, he had heard the shell's music
Played by Apollo and knew that no mortal
Dreamed of the harmonies of the high heavens,
Apollo's vision.

Then Rhadamanthus, stern keeper of records,
Measurer he by the rod and the letter,
Darkly demanded the scales mete his judgments,
That he might punish.

But Zeus turned from him, cold, inattentive,
Looking for one who sat near Aphrodite:
Eros, her offspring, or Love as some call him,
Humble but mighty.

Bade Hermes place in his hands the gold balance:
Bade Eros stand by the soul to discover
How much of love it had wrought and had lived by,
What for love suffered.

Then the boy Eros, smiled up at his mother,
Sweet Aphrodite, daintily took the scales
From the shrewd Hermes, stood before Zeus while he
Beckoned the spirit.

Then death relaxed his cold clutch on her fingers,
And the glad soul quickly ran to the love-god.
Naked she stood by him and the gold balance,
God of her worship.

Then the scales made by the cripple Hephaestus,
Gleaming, well finished, uninjured by usage,
Tipped till the arms of the balance stood upright,
Heavy with love pangs.

And all the gods in amazement and wonder,
Looked at the life newly born to their number;
Looked at young Eros, holding the balance,
Clasping the mortal.

And through the air came a song new in heaven,
So sweet, Apollo listened, attentive,
While all the Muses sought to remember—
Songs as of children.

And on the soul there appeared such a beauty
That Aphrodite turned her head, grew paler,
And Rhadamanthus snapped his rough measure.
Fear overcame them.

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